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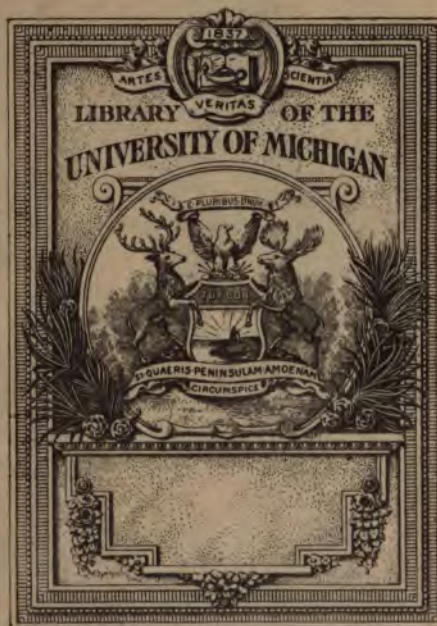
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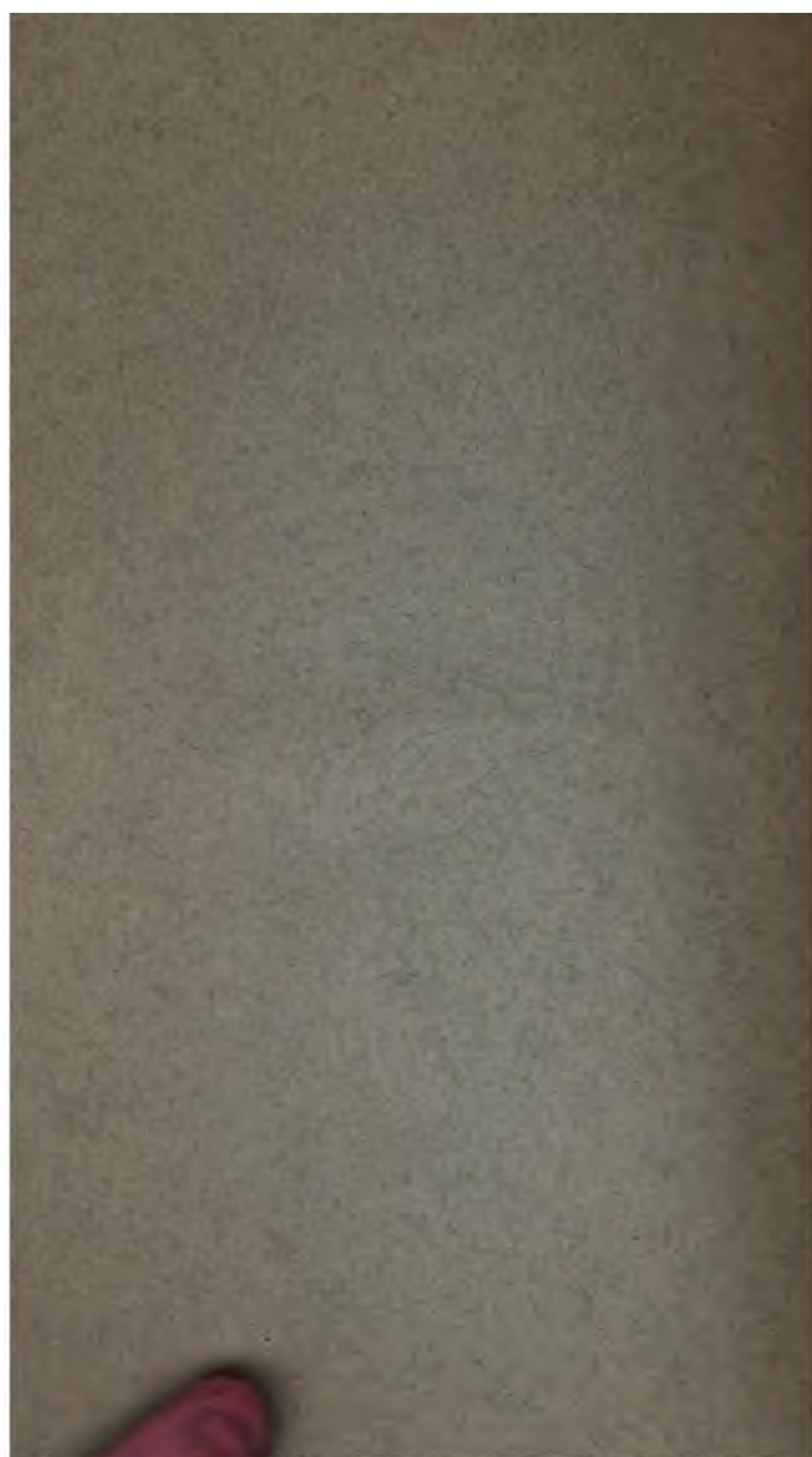
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1 Mrs. Gordon
THE
PRINCIPLES
1790
OF THE

Christian Religion.

Translated from the FRENCH
By the Rev^d THOMAS LALLY,
Late Fellow of *Peter-House*, CAMBRIDGE.

VOL. III.



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traite des principes de la
foy chretienne

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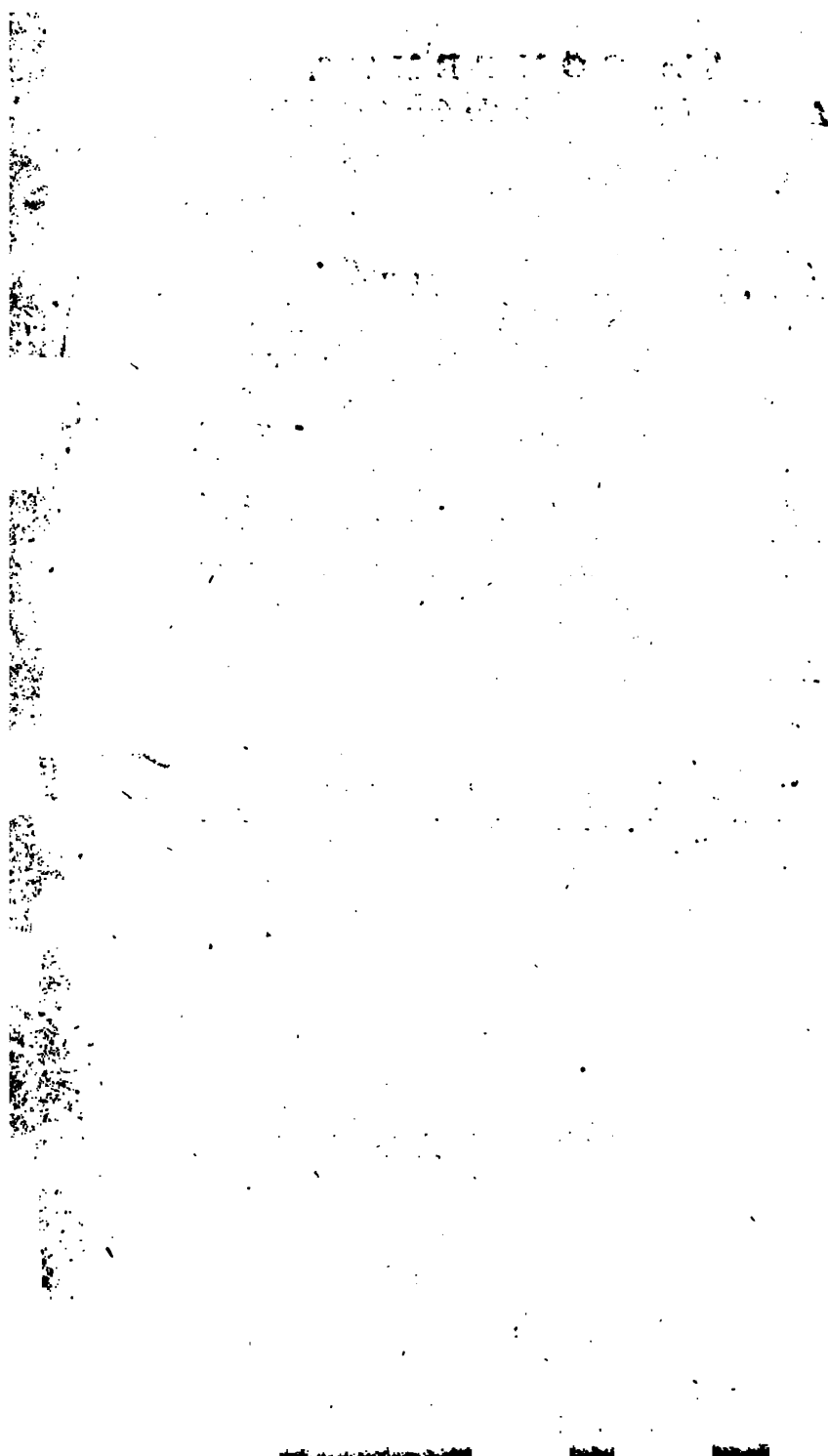
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A TREATISE



(1)

A
TREATISE
Of the PRINCIPLES of the
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

PART IV.

CHAP. I.

After so many proofs that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, that he rose from the dead, and sitteth at the right hand of his Father; the miracles, which he performed during his life, need no examination, in order that they may be looked upon as certain. We undertake, nevertheless, to examine them independently of the preceding proofs, and to demonstrate that they are not only certain, but moreover that they are an incontestable proof of Jesus Christ's being the promised Messiah, and the Son of God. 1. The turning of water into wine at the marriage in Cana: The mystery of that mutation. 2. The first increase of loaves in the desert: Jesus Christ's divinity demonstrated. The heavenly sustenance figured by a miraculous food. 3. The second increase of loaves, which is not only certain,

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but confirms many other preceding miracles.

4. *Jesus Christ walketh upon the waves, enables Peter to do the same, stills the sea, and the winds, abbreviates the apostle's labour, and couches under his miracles weighty truths.*

5. *The apostles awake Jesus Christ in the midst of a furious tempest, which ceases at his command: perpetual protection promised to the church.* 6. *Deliverance of a man possessed with a legion of devils: certainty of his being possessed, and their expulsion: truths attested by both: admirable proof of Jesus Christ's regard towards the least of his elect.*

7. *Why the possessed were so numerous in the time of our Saviour and his apostles, and why so frequent mention is made of their deliverance in the gospel.*

AFTER what has been said, there is no occasion we should give ourselves any trouble to prove the truth of the miracles performed by Jesus Christ, part of which are related in the gospel. The master must, at least, be equal to his disciples. And since the apostles cast out devils, heal diseases, raise the dead, impart the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and perform all these marvellous operations only by invoking his almighty name; it must be great folly to harbour the least doubt concerning the miracles which he himself performed in his life time.

Yet I shall not be satisfied with this, nor the preceding proofs: and I even consent, that the inquiry, we are now commencing, be made with

with as much severity and rigor, as if Jesus CHAP.
Christ now began to manifest himself, and to I.
establish his church; and as if every thing
which has hitherto been advanced, did not
plainly convince us, that he is risen from the
dead, and seated in the heavens upon the
same throne with his Father. I shall pass by
all the miracles, which have no connexion
with circumstances capable of proving their
certainty, and even of those I shall confine
myself to a small number, in order to avoid
prolixity.

A R T I C L E I.

*The turning of water into wine at the
marriage of Cana The mystery of
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I Commence with the first public miracle
attested by the disciples. St. John relates
it in this manner: * “ There was a marriage
“ in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of
“ Jesus was there. And both Jesus was
“ called, and his disciples, to the marriage.
“ And when they wanted wine, the mother
“ of Jesus saith unto him, they have no wine.
“ Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I
“ to do with thee? mine hour is not yet
“ come. His mother saith unto the servants,
“ Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And
“ there were set there six. water-pots of stone,

† John ii. 1.

PART
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“ to do with thee? mine hour is not yet
“ come. His mother saith unto the servants,
“ Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And
“ there were set there six water-pots of stone,

† John ii. 1.

PART “ after the manner of the purifying of the

IV. “ Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

“ Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots
 “ with water. And they filled them up to
 “ the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw
 “ out now, and bear unto the governor of the
 “ feast. And they bare it. When the ruler
 “ of the feast had tasted the water that was
 “ made wine, and knew not whence it was,
 “ (but the servants which drew the water
 “ knew) the governor of the feast called the
 “ bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every
 “ man at the beginning doth set forth good
 “ wine; and when men have well drunk,
 “ then that which is worse: but thou hast
 “ kept the good wine until now. This be-
 “ ginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of
 “ Galilee, and manifested forth his glory;
 “ and his disciples believed on him.

I have, in another place, animadverted on the truth of this history, wherein Jesus Christ should not have been made to answer his mother in a manner seemingly harsh, had it not been absolutely necessary to describe facts as they really happen'd; and on which, if reflections had been allowable, some explanation of that seeming harshness should have been inserted. I observe further at present, that after such an answer, it neither could be expected, that the blessed virgin should look upon the miracle she required as certain; nor should she warn the servants against hesitating to perform whatever her son would command, when he did not seem inclinable to order any thing.

In

In fine, it appeared no way probable, that CHAP.
Jesus Christ should command them to go fetch I.
water, when the wine failed; and all these
singular circumstances contribute to render
the certainty of this truth more evident.

But waving these observations; how is it possible to be sceptical on such a miracle? the servants themselves draw out the water, and fill the water-pots up to the brim. It was then impossible to intermix wine, nor can it be imagined, that there was any there. The wine proves excellent, then it is not counterfeited. It is much better than the first, therefore it is of a different sort. There is now plenty, and there was need of it. The master of the house, not knowing what Jesus had done, wondered that the bridegroom kept back the good wine, till the guests had lost their taste, and were no longer capable of distinguishing the goodness of the liquor. Perhaps the number of the guests being greater than was expected, occasioned the deficiency of wine. The miracle becomes public, and confirms in the faith the new disciples of Jesus Christ. Whosoever denies his assent to these proofs, must be an obstinate enemy to truth: he must disown, that God has the power of working miracles, who contests the certainty of this.

To this certainty a farther degree is still added, by the mystery couched under the simplicity of the history. For it appears, that the letter is wrote for the spirit, and that one miracle points out another. The incarnation of Jesus Christ, and its consequence the new alli-

PART *ance*, are often figured in the gospel by a

IV. marriage which a king made for his son,
 and by a feast, to which many guests were invited. The old patriarchs and prophets foretold, and expected this alliance. They were, in spirit, the amicable guests of the bridegroom, and partook of the first wine he provided. The synagogue, occupied in external purifications, and neither in body or mind prepared for the nuptials, had only empty water-pots, and were satisfied that the ministers, whose power extended no further, should fill them with water. But when the time was accomplished, the bridegroom came in person to sit down at the table of the guests, with his mother and his disciples: and, by the efficacy of his Spirit, turned the water-(with which the synagogue was contented) into a fine-flavoured wine, not only far exceeding that insipid water, but by many degrees more excellent than the wine of the patriarchs and prophets, who had only a bare hope, but not the reality of blessings; and even more delicious and exquisite than what had been served to the disciples at the beginning of the feast, before the ample effusion of the Spirit, and before they were divinely inebriated with it on the day of Pentecost, a day of compleat solemnity of nuptials, in which the bride and bridegroom enjoyed the entire possession of the divinity in common, and in which Jesus Christ's humanity was not only placed at the right hand of the Almighty, but shared also with the Word, the effusion of the Spirit and the heavenly wine.

That Spirit of grace and love was not to be communicated with that abundance, till after Jesus Christ had entered his glory. It was requiring a miracle of him, || before his hour was come, to ask of him the most exquisite wine before his return to heaven. But the figure might precede without inverting the order; and whilst Jesus Christ refuses the truth even at the request of his mother, in order to obey his heavenly Father, he obliged her with a miracle which was the external sign and pledge thereof.

ARTICLE II.

The first increase of loaves in the desert: Jesus Christ's divinity proved: The heavenly sustenance figured by a miraculous food.

“ **A** Great multitude followed Jesus in the
“ desert, because they saw his miracles
“ which he did on them that were diseased;
“ * he was moved with compassion toward
“ them, and he healed their sick. And
“ when it was evening, his disciples came to
“ him, saying, This is a desert place, and the
“ time is now past; send the multitude away,
“ that they may go into the villages and buy
“ them victuals. But Jesus said unto them,
“ They need not depart, give ye them to eat;
“ and addressed himself in particular to Philip,
“ say-

B 4

|| John vii. 37.

* Matth. xiv. 14.

PART “ saying, † Whence shall we buy bread
 IV. “ that these may eat? (and this he said to
 “ prove him, for he himself knew what
 “ he would do). Philip answered him,
 “ Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not
 “ sufficient for them, that every one of them
 “ may take a little. Jesus answered, ‡ How
 “ many loaves have ye? go and see. And
 “ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto
 “ him, || There is a lad here, which hath five
 “ barley loaves and two small fishes; but what
 “ are they among so many? Jesus saith unto
 “ them, Make them all to sit down by com-
 “ panies upon the green grass. And they sat
 “ down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties.
 “ And Jesus took the loaves, and when he
 “ had given thanks, he distributed to the dis-
 “ ciples, and the disciples to them that were
 “ set down; and likewise of the fishes, as
 “ much as they would. When they were
 “ filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up
 “ the fragments that remain, that nothing be
 “ lost. Therefore they gathered them toge-
 “ ther, and filled twelve baskets with the
 “ fragments of the five barley loaves, which
 “ remained over and above unto them that had
 “ eaten. And they that had eaten were about
 “ five thousand men, beside women and chil-
 “ dren. Then those men, when they had
 “ seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This
 “ is of a truth that prophet * that should come
 “ into the world. When Jesus therefore per-
 “ ceived

† John vi. 5. ‡ Mark vi. 38. || John vi. 9.

* Whom God had promised to Moses.

“ceived that they would come and take him CHAP.
“by force, to make him a king, he departed I.
“again into a mountain himself alone.”

He had already constrained his disciples to enter into a ship without him, to go to Capernaum, whither he went the next day, and where the multitude, which he miraculously fed in the desert, demanded of him how he came thither, as he did not enter the ship with his disciples? And then it was that Jesus made that long speech related by Saint John * in these words, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracle, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father † sealed:” and this hath he typified under the miraculous bread with which ye were fed.

I suppose that all this is read by a man who unhappily has no faith, but is concerned at it, and endeavours to be instructed; or at least by one who judges impartially, and is an enemy to all frivolous or ill-grounded difficulties. What precaution would he have had taken before the increase of loaves, in order to be assured of the truth of it? 'Tis Christ's disciples that remind him it was time to dismiss the people, that they might adjourn to the neighbouring villages and get food. Upon his ordering them

to

* Verse 26.

† Ταῦτα γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἐσφράγισεν ὁ Θεός;

PART to buy provisions themselves for the multitude, they replied, That it was impossible, because even with a large sum they could provide but a little quantity of victuals for each. He bids them enquire, whether there was any provision remaining among the multitude of people that staid behind, and distribute to them who were most in need of it; and after a strict examination, they found only five loaves and two fishes. What would the above-mentioned person have desired more? was not the testimony of twelve inspectors sufficient? And as the people were all acquainted with the disquietude in which Jesus Christ seems to be on their account, were they not obliged by all reason to ease him, by shewing their resources and helps, if they had any? The want is therefore certain, and the means of providing against it seems impossible. This is the first circumstance.

Jesus Christ commands his apostles to make the people sit down upon the grass, and to place them in ranks by hundreds and by fifties. By this method all confusion was avoided, and the attendance render'd easier. Besides, the miraculous operation was hereby exposed to the view of all the multitude, and there was no possibility to deceive by any artifice, a people seated at different tables, who certainly knew whether they were fed or not; and whether they had abundance or scarcity. Confusion might have covered the deceit. They might have thrown a few loaves among
the

the multitude, which would have been catch'd up by a small number of those who were most greedy; afterwards it might have been asserted, that there had been a sufficient quantity for the whole multitude, had they been distributed in order and managed with œconomy. But the ranging the people in different companies, none of which were more and many less than an hundred, and their sitting quietly on the grass, each confining himself to his proper rank, sets the truth or falshood of this miracle in the clearest light. This is a second circumstance, which ought to be a sufficient proof to the most distrustful.

After the multitude had eaten, Jesus bids his apostles gather up the fragments, which was a plain proof of their having plenty: and the disciples filled twelve baskets with the fragments that remained. After this can there be the least room for incredulity?

The people, struck with a miracle in itself so astonishing, and in which they were so greatly interested, were convinced that he was the prophet promised by the Almighty to succeed Moses, and to become the mediator of the new covenant †. And they were desirous to pronounce him king, because the Messiah, according to their notions, was entitled to the same sovereignty as other princes, and to rule over Israel, as David and Solomon had done. This fourth circumstance is a farther proof of the miracle, and of the impression it had made on every body's mind.

Finally,

† Deut. xviii. 15.

PART IV. Finally, Jesus Christ speaking the next day to the same people in the village of Capernaum, who were still amazed at the miracle which he performed, rebuked them for being wholly sensible of the temporal effect of it, whilst they neglected to apply it to their eternal salvation. This reproach not only establishes the miracle, but likewise gives it an additional dignity, by exhibiting the main design that Jesus Christ had in performing it, and the mystery to which he was willing it should contribute.

It is therefore impossible either to oppose such strong evidence, or to lessen the credit of a miracle, which had the testimony of more than ten thousand persons, not mere spectators, but guests, (the women and children being at least equal in number to the men) and which is so necessarily connected with other facts, equally public and true. But we must not stop here; and if the miracle is unquestionable, it is as much past dispute that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the Son of God: for in the same discourse, where he speaks of this miracle to the people of Capernaum, he plainly says, "That he is the † living bread, which came down from heaven, and which gives life to the world; whoso believeth on him hath eternal life, and that he will raise those at the last day, who shall come unto him after having been drawn by his heavenly Father." He demonstrates these secret truths by a public miracle. He says, that this miracle is the external sign and seal thereof: and as a prodigy manifested

† John vi.

nifested with so public evidence cannot be re-
jected, so the doctrine which it enforces can-
not but equally be entitled to a thorough be-
lief.

CHAP.
I.

Let us resume our discourse, and look upon the five loaves and two fishes in the hands of Jesus Christ, as the grain and seed annually increased by his providence by a miracle equally true, and much more astonishing, tho' by its familiarity it becomes less observed. Let us consider how in the prodigies themselves he follows the order which he has prescribed to nature, by demanding on the side of man something which conceals the creation, and that belongs to the ancient creatures which he intends to multiply. Let us admire how his fruitful hands discharge themselves into those of his apostles, and from them into the breasts of the people, without any one's being able to unravel the mystery of such a fecundity, altho' the whole multitude partook of the blessing. And how in the increase and distribution of a temporal nourishment, he has figured the mystery of the gospel and of the spiritual food, which he directly bestowed on his ministers, and which by their means he convey'd to the very babes.

But chiefly let us consider how attentive he was to prove himself the promised Messiah, and yet without permitting the people to proclaim him king, because he was already invested with the royal dignity in a more sublime, and in a more perfect manner than the people thought or desired. He shews what he is,
and

PART and evades the people's intent: this is acting
 IV. like himself, and giving a most sensible mark
 of his divine character.

Lastly, let us admire, how after such a prodigy he is infinitely superior to it; how little affected with what dazles the people, and even is afflicted at it; and how useless the miracle in itself appeared to him, if he was to be satisfied with the admiration of an interested people, and if it were not the figure and promise of another, more suitable to his magnificence, and love for his elect. "You seek me (says he) not because ye saw the miracles (which ought to have faith for their fruit) but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath the Father sealed," and plainly described, by feeding you in the desert with the miraculous bread.

A R T I C L E III.

The second increase of loaves, which is not only certain, but confirms many of the foregoing miracles.

THE miracle that we are now treating of, has been a second time repeated with almost the same circumstances, and this repetition compleats the preceding demonstrations. Thus Saint Matthew relates this Miracle,

racle, † “ Jesus came nigh unto the sea of CHAP.
“ Galilee, and went up into a mountain and I.
“ sat down there. And great multitudes came
“ unto him, having with them those that were
“ lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many
“ others, and cast them at Jesus feet, and he
“ healed them : insomuch that the multitude
“ wondered, when they saw the dumb to
“ speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame
“ to walk, and the blind to see ; and they
“ glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus
“ called his disciples unto him, and said, I
“ have compassion on the multitude, because
“ they continue with me now three days
“ and have nothing to eat. I will not send
“ them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.
“ And his disciples say unto him, Whence
“ should we have so much bread in the wil-
“ derness, as to fill so great a multitude ? And
“ Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves
“ have ye ? And they said, Seven, and a few
“ little fishes. And he commanded the multi-
“ tude to sit down on the ground. And he
“ took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave
“ thanks, and brake them, and gave to his
“ disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
“ And they did all eat and were filled. And
“ they took up of the broken meat that was
“ left, seven baskets full. And they that did
“ eat, were four thousand men, besides wo-
“ men and children.”

In order to establish the truth of this mi-
racle, I am far from making use of the same
reflections

† Matth. xv. 29.

PART reflections the foregoing supplied us with ; yet

IV. I cannot help observing, that if this second
increase of loaves is unquestionable, the preceding miracles are likewise so: for both had the same testimony, being wrought in the presence of more than eight thousand people ; and the truth thereof is confirmed to us by the miraculous feeding which followed. Now what sort of miracles are these ? Some of the most striking, and such as are far beyond any other power, except that of the Creator. These are the dumb, whose speech is restored ; the lame, who walk ; the blind, who see ; the maimed of every kind made whole. Objects of compassion were laid at Jesus Christ's feet ; and the whole multitude, that was present at this sad spectacle, was suddenly seized with admiration, when they saw all these poor wretches cured.

How is it possible to deny these miracles under such convincing circumstances ? and if any one should be so obstinate ; how will he be able to disown the increase of seven loaves for eight thousand people, of which there remained, after the multitude was satisfied, seven baskets full ? shall we treat as a dream a prodigy of which there is such a memorial ? shall we imagine that the apostles afterwards contrived an affair of this publick nature, the falsity of which could be so easily detected, since they mentioned both time and place, and ingenuously owned, that both the miracles of the loaves had made so light an impression upon their minds, (altho' they were ministers on that occasion) that they were still distrustful
of

of the power and foresight * of Jesus Christ; CHAP. I.
and upon a certain occasion, they imagined that he accused them of being unmindful of his having provided them with bread, because he bids them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, meaning their hypocrisy by this figurative term.

But it will be said, from whence came so great a number of sick and maimed? two reasons may be assigned: the one, the astonishing facility with which Jesus Christ cured them; the other, the great reputation which his power and goodness gained him, not only in Judea, but also in the neighbouring provinces. We may judge of it by this passage alone of Saint Mark: † “ A great multitude
“ from Galilee followed him, and from
“ Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from
“ Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they
“ about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude,
“ when they had heard what great things he did,
“ came unto him. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on
“ him, because of the multitude, lest they
“ should throng him. For he had healed
“ many, insomuch that they pressed upon

* “ Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye
“ of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye
“ have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither
“ remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many
“ baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye
“ do not understand, that I spake it not to you concerning
“ bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees
“ and Sadducees? Mat. xvi. 8.

† Mark iii. 7.

PART “ him, for to touch him, as many as had
IV. “ plagues.”

There are many instances of the like course in the gospel, and numberless miracles which have been operated on the sick by the bare touch of the garment of Jesus Christ, nay by the very hem. But, as I at first promised, I shall indiscriminately pass by all those prodigies, and shall only mention such as have the clearest marks of certainty. And even of these I have taken notice, only because they have an immediate connexion with the second increase of loaves, which carries its own evidence with it, and likewise diffuses a clear and decisive light upon the preceding prodigies.

A R T I C L E IV.

Jesus Christ walks upon the waves, makes Peter do the same, stills the sea and the winds, abbreviates the labour of the apostles, and under these miracles couches important truths.

“ AFTER the first increase of loaves,
“ Jesus * constrained his disciples to
“ get into a ship, and to go before him unto
“ the other side, while he sent the multitude
“ away. But † the ship was now in the midst
“ of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind
“ was.

* Mat. xiv. 22. † Ibid. ver. 24. Mark vi. 48.

“ was contrary. And in the fourth watch CHAP.
“ of the night, Jesus went unto them walking I.
“ upon the sea. And when the disciples saw
“ him walking on the sea, they were troubled,
“ saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for
“ fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto
“ them saying, † Be of good cheer, it is I, be
“ not afraid. And Peter answered him, Lord,
“ if it be thou, bid me come unto thee
“ on the water. And he said, Come. And
“ when Peter was come down out of the ship,
“ he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But
“ when he saw the wind boisterous, he was
“ afraid: and beginning to sink, he cried,
“ saying, Lord, save me. And immediately
“ Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught
“ him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith,
“ wherefore didst thou doubt? ‡ And he went
“ up unto them into the ship, and the wind
“ ceased: and they were sore amazed in them-
“ selves beyond measure, and wondered. For
“ they considered not the miracle of the
“ loaves, for their heart was hardened. Then
“ they, that were in the ship, came and wor-
“ shipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the
“ Son of God.”

The more I examine into this history, which contains several miracles, the more sensibly I am convinced of its truth. First, the whole multitude were witnesses, that the apostles entered the ship alone, and that Jesus tarried to dismiss the people. This induced

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† Mat. xiv. 28. ‡ Mark vi. 51, 52.

PART the people, who were astonished, to demand
IV. of him how he came * thither.

Secondly, None of those circumstances would occur naturally to one's mind; the miracle of walking upon the waters, at a time when the wind was boisterous, escapes ones thought. More natural it would be to imagine, that he was either conveyed on the wings of the wind, or transported thither by an angel. Saint Peter's demand, who was in safety in the ship, to walk on the waters like Jesus Christ, could arise only from having ocular demonstration of the marvellous act, and from the firm persuasion he already had of his infinite power. But if the historian imposed on us with regard to the apostle's walking upon the waters, he would not have given us this additional fiction, that he was afraid of the wind, and that his fear was the occasion of his sinking.

Thirdly, If the fact had not been true and public, the evangelist would not have mentioned that term, with which Jesus Christ rebukes the first of his apostles, as a man † of little faith, and rather would have omitted it at a time, when his reputation was necessary for the support of the church.

Fourthly, Another Evangelist would have been very far from observing of all the apostles, that through blindness of heart they were un-
atten-

* "When they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? John vi. 25.

† Mat. xiv. 31.

attentive * and less sensible to the miracle of
the increase of loaves, than the common people, who through gratitude and interest openly avowed their design of proclaiming him king.

CHAP.
I.

In short, it is an idle insinuation, that an history, which has gained such credit, and is so circumstantiated, which has been examined by the apostles, and wrote with all possible marks of sincerity, is not entituled to a thorough belief; a history that can give no offence, but because it is an evident proof of the christian religion.

Here we must attentively observe, that Jesus Christ did not perform his miracles as the prophets, and his disciples, in the name of another; but to confirm his divine mission, and to prove that he was the promised Saviour and Messiah; that he wrought them as the Son of God, having all nature at command, and being powerful by his will alone: in a word, that the intention of these marvellous operations was in order to gain their belief, that they should put an entire confidence in him, and that there should be no limits to the faith and hope, of which he is the term and object. Thus does he find nothing but what was lawful in the adoration paid to him by the apostles, and those that were in the ship; and he not only approved of their styling him

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the

* "He went up unto them into the ship, and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened." Mark vi. 52.

PART the Son of God, but also encouraged their

IV. opinion of his having sufficiently confirmed it to them by walking on the tempestuous sea, by enabling Peter to do the same, by reproaching his distrust in not relying on his word, by suspending him in the abyss with his almighty hand, by causing a dead calm instantly to succeed an hurricane and tempest, and by making the ship advance immediately to the other side, which could not be effected by rowing, nor by human means during a whole night. Now this circumstance is also to be observed, as it reconciles the seeming contradiction between those evangelists, who affirm that Jesus Christ entered the ship; * and Saint John, who looked upon it as unnecessary, because the ship was instantly at land. Which imports, that he entered it, tho' it was of no use to him.

My design is not to unfold what the miracles of Jesus Christ spiritually and mystically contain, when the history does not derive from thence a new degree of certainty. But when the spirit makes part of the letter, or (to speak more plain) when it not only tends to illustrate but to prove it, I am obliged to make a proper use of this advantage; for I have observed, that when no more than the miracle is shewn to people, who, in other respects, do not want understanding, they have a secret repugnancy to submit to it; but that repugnancy vanishes, and admiration

* "They willingly received him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land, whither they went." John vi.

miration is substituted in its place, when CHAP.
they perceive the design and necessity of the I.
miracle.

It is plain that the church is figured by the ship, in which Peter and the apostles embarked: and it is obvious, that the night, the contrary wind and the waves, point out the conflicts that the gospel should meet with in its first promulgation, and the commotions of the church throughout all ages. The useless efforts of the apostles, when they laboured with their oars during the absence of Jesus Christ, conveys a lesson to the ministers of the Church, that their endeavours, if merely human, will be attended with little success; that Jesus Christ's attention to the distress of his disciples, when they imagined him to be absent, manifests his concern for the church, even after he is become invisible; that by coming to them towards the end of the night, he intended to be a sure comfort to those who confide in him, in the greatest extremity; that by walking on the waves, he was desirous to prove himself to be absolute master of the world, and superior to all the violence it employs against his ministers; that by discovering himself at a distance, and being taken for a spirit, he designed to confirm those in the faith, who are tempted to treat his promises as ideal and without reality, and more capable to augment, than to preserve from danger; that by speaking and saying unto them *It is I*, he intimated to them, that he was the only one who ought to be feared, and on whom

PART their hopes should be centered ; that by enabling Peter to walk upon the waters, he manifested that whilst he was present no wreck could happen ; and that if by his command, and to be faithful to him, we seem on some occasions to relinquish the ship, it is with safety, as long as we trust in him ; that by entering the ship and causing Peter to return into it, he promises never to forsake his church, and always to protect the public ministry, by whom it is conducted ; and by making the ship instantly come to land after a great deal of hard and fruitless toil, he declares that he will shorten when he pleases the labour of his ministers ; but especially of those whom he shall employ in the latter days, when his grace almost alone, and in a very little time, will complete what remains of their course and labour.

Let this miracle be examined with respect to its mystical and prophetical sense, and I question not but an impartial examiner will find it worthy of Jesus Christ, as founder and protector of the church ; and not only will judge it true, but comfortable, and fraught with instructions proper for the nourishment of faith, and the support of christian hope.

ARTICLE V.

The apostles awake Jesus Christ in the midst of a furious tempest, which ceases at his command. Perpetual protection promised to his church.

BEfore this miracle, Jesus Christ perform'd another similar to it in some circumstances, tho' different in others, but the truth of both is attested by the same proofs. One day, after having spoke to the people in different parables; † “When the even was come, “he saith unto his disciples, Let us pass over “unto the other side. And when they had “sent away the multitude, they took him, “even as he was in the ship, and there were “also with him other little ships. But in the “passage a great storm of wind arose, and the “waves beat into the ship, so that it was now “full. Jesus was in the hinder part of the “ship asleep on a pillow: and they awake “him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou “not that we perish? And he arose and rebuked the winds, and said unto the sea, “Peace, be still: and the wind ceased, and “there was a great calm. And he said unto “them, ‡ Why are ye so fearful? how is it that “ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly,

† Matth. iv. 35.

‡ Τι δειλοί ἐστε ὕπνῳ; ὡς ἐκ ἔχετε πίστιν.
Luke viii. 25, &c.

PART “ ingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and
 IV. “ the sea obey him.”

Every thing in this miracle seems to have been concerted by Jesus Christ for the instruction of his apostles, and to demonstrate his power to them ; but on their part every thing is unforeseen, and if they had been consulted upon the circumstances, they would not have permitted Jesus Christ to have slept upon a pillow, whilst the tempestuous waves broke into the ship ; and they still would have less expected the reproach of being deficient in faith, which he made them when he awaked, for having been afraid in so great danger, or because they believed that during his sleep their peril was unknown to him, or thought he was unconcern'd about it. All this cannot occur to those who never saw any such thing performed. Less possible is it to conceive, that the winds and sea should obey the voice of a man, and that at his command an immediate silence should ensue. One must have experienced it to form any such thought, and have been a witness of that imperious command, *Peace, be still* ; and of its astonishing effect, in order to be able to relate it in as concise and majestic a manner as it was pronounced.

To the foregoing reflections let us subjoin the deposition of the apostles, who weathered the storm, and therefore the strongest evidence both of the tempest and succeeding calm ; who at one time were affrighted, at another full of astonishment, and who with the greatest sincerity

rity relate this prodigy, without essaying to CHAP. justify their concern, without extenuating the I. reproach which their master made them of having little faith, without excusing themselves on account of his sleep, and the necessity of awakening him.

Doubtless there were other ships exposed to equal danger, and saved by the same miracle. The place whither he was bound is mention'd†: the miracle, which he did in that place by delivering two possessed, who infested the whole country, is notorious, as will shortly appear‡. It is impossible therefore for human reason to oppose such evidence, and 'tis consequently just to think that every sober mind will surrender to such conviction.

But this is only a part, the residue is still more excellent. Jesus Christ, who for a little space of time had silenced the winds and the sea, calls to them, and secretly excites their fury. The waves enter the ship, but he knows to what measure. In the midst of the noise and hurricane he sleeps securely; and whilst he makes a trial of the confidence his disciples place in his power and love, he conceals both under the appearance of imbecillity and neglect. Every thing seems lost, and in a desperate condition. Their faith is almost shipwreck'd, and runs into real danger, while it is too much alarmed at the danger of the ship, in which Jesus Christ was at rest. He awakes, and by a word lays the wind and silences the deep: teaching

† The country of the Gadarenes.

‡ Matth. viii. Luke viii. Mark vii.

PART teaching his disciples once for all, that he is
 IV. equally master of the world and of his church ;
 that no tempest can arise but by his permission,
 and cannot exceed the bounds, which he has
 prescribed to it, as well in respect to the time
 as effect ; that he is at rest in the church, when
 it is thought ready to perish ; that it is a want
 of faith, to doubt his protection unto the end
 of time ; that his apparent sleep was only to
 rouse us from our own lethargy ; and that his
 all-powerful voice is able to make all opposition
 to his church instantly subside, how rebellious
 and insurmountable soever it may be, according
 to the natural order of things.

A R T I C L E VI.

*Deliverance of a man possessed with a
 legion of devils : certainty of his be-
 ing possessed, and their expulsion :
 truths attested by both : admirable
 proof of Jesus Christ's regard to-
 wards the least of his elect.*

THE country, where Christ landed, was
 that of the Gergesenes, and “ as soon as
 “ he arrived, there met him two † possessed
 “ with devils, coming out of the tombs,
 “ exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass
 “ by that way.” One was more fierce and
 formidable than the other, which perhaps is
 the reason that only one is mentioned by Saint
 Mark

† Matth. viii. 28.

Mark and Saint Luke. I shall follow Saint CHAP.

Mark, whose words are these: † “Jesus was I.

“no sooner come out of the ship, than there
“met him out of the tombs, a man with an
“unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among
“the tombs, and no man could bind him,
“no not with chains. Because that he had
“been often bound with fetters and chains,
“and the chains had been often plucked asun-
“der by him, and the fetters broken in pieces,
“neither could any man tame him. And
“always night and day, he was in the moun-
“tains and in the tombs crying, and cutting
“himself with stones. And when he saw
“Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,
“and cried with a loud voice and said, What
“have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of
“the most high God? I adjure thee by God,
“that thou torment me not. And he said
“unto him, Come out of the man, thou un-
“clean spirit. And he asked him, What is
“thy name? And he answered, saying, My
“name is Legion; for we are many. And
“he besought him much, that he would not
“command them to go out into the deep, and
“that he would not send them away ‡ out of
“the country. Now there was there nigh
“unto the mountains, a great herd of swine
“feeding. And all the devils besought
“him, saying, Send us into the swine, that
“we may enter into them. And forthwith
“Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean
“spirits went out, and entered into the swine,
and

† Mark v. 2.

‡ Luke viii. 30.

PART “ and the herd ran violently down a steep
 IV. “ place into the sea (they were about two
 “ thousand) and were choaked in the sea. And
 “ they that fed the swine fled, and told it in
 “ the city and in the country. And they
 “ went out to see what it was, that was done.
 “ And they come to Jesus, and see him that
 “ was possessed with the devil, and had the
 “ legion, sitting, and cloathed, and in his
 “ right mind, and they were afraid. And
 “ they that saw it, told them how it befell
 “ him that was possessed with the devil, and
 “ also concerning the swine. And they began
 “ to pray him to depart out of their coasts.
 “ And when he was come into the ship, he
 “ that had been possessed with the devil, pray-
 “ ed him, that he might be with him. How-
 “ beit, Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto
 “ him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them
 “ how great things the Lord hath done for
 “ thee, and hath had compassion on thee.
 “ And he departed, and began to publish in
 “ * Decapolis, how great things Jesus had done
 “ for him, and all men did marvel.”

I do not imagine, that the most obstinate unbelievers can deny the truth of this man's being possessed. I insist neither upon his violence or fierceness, nor on his strength capable of bursting chains asunder, nor on his savage life, which made him guilty of excess to himself, by his clamours and unwearied agitations: I confine myself to these four or five circumstances,

* In a country so called, because of ten towns situated in its territory.

stances, which are certainly decisive. 1. To CHAP. I.
the manner in which he fell down at Jesus's feet,* whom he had never seen, for he had laboured under this possession for a great while, and calling him the Son of the most high God, which was saying as much, or more than the apostles themselves. 2. To the possessed man's supplications, and adjuring Christ in the name of God, not to torment him, and not to command him to go out into the deep, a term which plainly imports the deepest hell, little known to the Jews, and denied by the Sadducees. 3. To the permission, which he asked, of entering into the swine, which was impossible for the possessed, and could have no meaning in respect to him. 4. To the violence with which the herd of swine (which were 2000) ran down a steep place into the sea, at the very instant Jesus granted leave to those, who spoke by the mouth of the possessed, to enter into those impure animals. 5, lastly, To the tranquillity, right mind, as well as the entire and sudden change of the possessed, as soon as the legion quitted him and entered the herd of swine.

The possession then is out of dispute, and so is of course the deliverance. Yet let us thoroughly examine the history in another view. Could the Gergesenes be imposed on, with respect to a fact of such importance, if it had been absolutely unknown to them? if no one, in their neighbourhood, resembled the man, whom the evangelists spoke of? if the persons interested in the herd of swine (which we suppose

* Luke viii. 27.

PART suppose choaked) had sustained no loss? if in

IV. the country of Decapolis there never had been
 any report of the great compassion, which a
 man full of acknowledgment declared to have
 been shewn him by Jesus Christ?

Is it natural to suppose a legion of devils in
 one man possessed? or for these spirits to request
 as a great favour, the liberty of visiting the
 herd of swine, and thus to remain in the
 country: and afterwards to suppose, that these
 spirits should force the whole herd precipitate-
 ly into the sea? was the abyss, into which these
 spirits were afraid of being hurried before the
 time of their last condemnation, and such a fear,
 agreeable to common prejudices? could it be
 expected that a man so miraculously cured,
 and requesting, as a farther grace, to attend
 Jesus Christ, should not have obtained his re-
 quest? a man whose presence would have gi-
 ven so much weight to the doctrine and other
 miracles of his deliverer? in short, is it cre-
 dible (if the event had not declared it) that
 Jesus Christ should go to the country of the
 Gergesenes for the sake of one man alone, and
 should so easily have acquiesced to the petition
 by which they solicited him to depart from
 thence? This, and many other obvious remarks,
 render the truth of this miracle unquestion-
 able.

But in how many things does the miracle
 itself afford us demonstration? I shall wave
 the acknowledgment of the devils, that Jesus
 Christ was the Son of the most High. I am
 satisfied to behold them, tho' a legion in
 number,

number, prostrate, and trembling before him: CHAP.
acknowledging at his feet that he is able to I.
send them into the deep, and to anticipate the
time, in which he will constrain them to cast
themselves into it: demanding, as a grace,
the permission of entering the unclean ani-
mals, and confessing thereby their dependence,
degradation, and proneness to the greatest im-
purity.

I admire with what goodness Jesus Christ
protected a man whom these cruel beasts had,
it seems, so long in subjection; whom they
detained, remote from all succour, in solitudes;
whom they made incessantly to cry out, to
have involuntary motions, to cut himself with
stones, and against whom a whole legion, un-
fettered, vented their malice, but without ha-
ving the power of killing him, or of casting
him headlong into the sea, whither these fu-
ries hurried the whole defenceless herd of
swine.

I admire the compassion which Jesus
Christ shewed to that sheep whom he went
in search of in the midst of so many wolves,
and even carried, as it were, in his bosom,
thinking his labour sufficiently paid by saving
him, in spite of the tempest which seemed to
oppose, and in spite of all hell which conspi-
red his ruin: consenting without any re-
luctance, to relinquish the country, after
so eminent an act of charity, and being de-
sirous, that this singular circumstance, which
solely depended on himself, should demon-
strate to future ages his love towards the least

PART. of his elect, and to those who seemed the most
IV. abandoned.

ARTICLE VII.

Why the possessed were so numerous at the time of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and why so frequent mention is made of their deliverance in the gospel.

WHAT I am now entering upon, obliges me to account for an affair, which greatly embarrasses some men, who are very far from espousing incredulity, but not sufficiently grounded in religion, and who are little moved by the various cures effected on the possessed; with which the gospel abounds.

The world for a great while had paid adoration to devils without knowing it, and these lying spirits had usurped the worship due to God alone. In every part of the earth they had temples and altars; and, under false names, they assumed to themselves the sovereignty of heaven and earth, and all nature. Jesus Christ came to regain his kingdom, and to banish the usurper. He came, as he foretold by his prophets, to destroy the wicked by the breath of his mouth. It was necessary to convince mankind, whom the evil spirit had seduced, of his malice and weakness, and he had no shorter, nor more sensible means for it, than to admit these evil spirits to enter into the bodies of some men.

men, in whom they only caused terrible con-
vulsions, and unlucky accidents, which ren-
dered them odious: and afterwards, by his
word and authority alone, to cast them out;
which shewed not only their impotence and
imbecillity, but also their misery and repro-
bation.

It was upon that account, that when Jesus
Christ was desirous to make himself known,
he likewise permitted the devils to do the
same; for, by allowing them, in some mea-
sure, to imitate his incarnation, he caught them
in the same snare which they had laid for man;
and he made use of the very prey, which
they were so greedy of, to retain them in a state
of captivity, in order that they might become
visible in one sense, and corporeal by uniting
themselves to man with an intent to hurt him;
and that being held with the chains which
their malice had invented, they might be
brought before their judge and master, pub-
lickly condemned by him as impure spirits,
and afterwards expelled the internal temple,
which by their usurpation they defiled, and
from all the external temples, where they con-
cealed, under a false majesty, the most shameful
disgrace, and the deepest misery that could be-
fall a creature.

By this means, the lawful king, and the usur-
per, became very easy to be distinguished. For
the one only consulted how to be beneficial to
man: the other, only how to torment this
same man, after he had deluded him. The
one had only to appear and to speak, to put his

PART rival to flight: and the other, in spite of his
 IV. pride, was constrained to fall down before his
 sovereign, whose name he had usurped, and to
 confess before those whom he had deceived,
 that he had no power, not even even over the
 uncleanest beasts; that no corner of the earth
 was under his dominion, and that his true
 place was the abyfs.

Every possessed person * presented to Jesus
 Christ, was a sensible proof of these essential points
 of religion. One, all at once, became deaf, blind
 and dumb by a single devil. Another was
 driven † sometimes into the fire, sometimes
 into the water, in order to destroy him. Ano-
 ther endured great pains; another was bow-
 ed together with violence, so that he could
 not look up to the heavens. All these unfor-
 tunate people came to Jesus Christ with these
 cruel symptoms, who cured them and set
 them free, either by his word, or by the
 touch of his hands; and, when he had made
 the devils confess his name and divinity,
 he afterwards deprived them of the faculty of
 speech, as lying spirits, who in publishing the
 truth dishonoured it.

It is thus that Jesus Christ, according to the
 word of the apostle, signalized all his steps
 by some ‡ good offices, and by curing all
 those that were oppressed of the devil. But he
 did not limit his compassion to these external
 graces:

* Matth. ix. 32. Mark iv. 32.

† Mark ix. 21. Matth. xv. 22. Luke xiii. 4.—16.
 Luke iv. 41.

‡ "He went about doing good, and healing all that were
 "oppressed of the devil." Acts x. 38.

graces: he made use of it only to point out the difference between a lawful king and a tyrant, and to shew that he came to destroy the work of the devil, † to drive him out from the heart of man, to deprive him of his weapons by eradicating concupiscence; and by diffusing light and charity on every side, to annihilate his power founded on ignorance and self-love. CHAP. II.

The opposition of the two kingdoms would have been less evident to the generality of men, were it not for the extreme difference which the deliverance of the possessed demonstrated between the two kings. And this is the reason why possessions continued to be frequent after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in order that the apostles and their disciples should publish to the world, and especially to the Gentiles, how great his power was over || those spirits, who had hitherto deluded mankind. For they were not contented to cast them out in the name of Jesus Christ, but they very often obliged them to confess that they were seducing spirits; that they had to that time concealed themselves under the names of false di-

D 3

vinities;

† "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John iii. 8.

|| Omnis hæc nostra in illos [dæmones] dominatio & potestas de nominatione Christi valet, & de commemoratione eorum quæ sibi a Deo per arbitrum Christum immigrentia expectant. Christum timentes in Deo, & Deum in Christo, subjiciuntur servis Dei & Christi. Ita de contactu deque afflatu nostro, contemplatione & representatione ignis illius correpti, etiam de corporibus nostro imperio excedunt inviti & dolentes, & vobis presentibus erubescetes . . . Credite illis cum verum de se loquuntur, qui mentientibus creditis. Nemo ad suum dedecus mentitur. Tertull. Apolog. c. 23.

PART vinities; that they were the same, who demanded divine honours to be paid them throughout the whole world. Such an acknowledgment, in presence of the very people they had deceived, must have been of infinite service to the advancement of christianity; as Tertullian intimates to us, who boldly affirms in a writing presented to the emperor and senate, that every christian, who shall have preserved his integrity from his baptism, shall constrain the devil by these exorcisms, in their presence to acknowledge, that he made himself to be worshipped by them, and notwithstanding that, is only a spirit of darkness, condemned to eternal punishment. The same author adds, with a thorough security, † that he would consent they should put such a christian to the most cruel death they could invent, if experience did not verify his assertion.

Perhaps in another place we shall see what testimony the devil was compelled to give, not only of Jesus Christ, but of his martyrs, and even

† Edatur hic aliquis sub tribunalibus vestris, quem dæmone agi constat. Jussus a quolibet christiano loqui spiritus ille, tam se dæmonem confitebitur de vero, quam alibi Deum de falso. Æque producat aliquis ex iis qui de Deo pati existimantur, qui aris inhalantes numen de nidore concipiunt. . . Illa ipsa virgo cœlestis pluviarum pollicitatrix; iste ipse Æsculapius medicinarum demonstrator. . . Nisi se dæmones confessi fuerint, christiano mentiri non audentes, ibidem illius christiani procacissimi sanguinem fundite. Quid isto opere manifestius? quid hæc probatione fidelius? Simplicitas veritatis in medio est. *Eod.* c. 25. Hæc testimonia deorum vestrorum christianos facere consueverunt, quia plurimum illis credendo, in Christo Domino credimus. Ipsi literarum nostrarum fidem accendunt. Ipsi spei nostræ fidentiam ædificant. *Ibid.*

even of their ashes. But what we have above said CHAP. is sufficient; and I imagine, after such an ex- I. planation, people, who have more superficially considered the miracles of Jesus Christ relating to the possessed, than the others, will perceive the necessity of them, and be the more strongly convinced of their connection with the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and the end of his ministry.

C H A P. II.

Continuation of the same matter: the miracles of Jesus Christ are certain; and invincibly prove that he is the Son of God and Saviour of the world. 1. Paralytic presented to Jesus Christ by uncovering the roof of an house; which by curing him, demonstrates his power of forgiving sins. 2. The man born blind restored to sight; circumstances, which ascertain the truth of the miracle. 3. The efforts of the pharisees in order to eclipse this miracle, establish the truth of it. 4. One such miracle is an evident proof of Jesus Christ's divinity, and of his principal mysteries: depth of Jesus Christ's designs in a miracle, which unites in its circumstances almost all the parts of the christian religion. 5. Resurrection of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, preceded by the cure of a woman, only by touching the hem of Jesus Christ's garment: certainty of both miracles.

PART
IV.

ARTICLE I.

Paralytic presented to Jesus Christ by uncovering the roof of an house, who proves, by curing him, his power of forgiving sins.

“ ON a certain day * as Jesus Christ
 “ was teaching, there were pharisees
 “ and doctors of the law sitting by, which
 “ were come out of every town of Galilee,
 “ and Judea, and Jerusalem; and as the power
 “ of the Lord was present to heal them, there
 “ † were gathered together so great a number
 “ of people, insomuch that they could not
 “ come near the door. Now they brought
 “ to him one sick of the palsy, which
 “ was borne of four. And when they could
 “ not come nigh him for the press, they
 “ uncovered the roof where he was, and when
 “ they had broken it up, they let down the
 “ bed, wherein the sick of the palsy lay, ‡
 “ and placed him in the midst before Jesus,
 “ who when he saw their faith, said unto the
 “ sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are for-
 “ given thee. And the scribes and pharisees
 “ began to reason among themselves, Who is
 “ this which speaketh blasphemies? who can
 “ forgive sins, but God alone? || But when
 “ Jesus

* Luke v. 17.

† Mark ii. 2.

‡ Luke xvii. 19. Mark v. Luke xxi.

|| Mark viii.

“ Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answer-
“ ing said unto them, What reason ye in
“ your hearts? whether is easier to say, Thy
“ sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and
“ walk? But that ye may know, that the
“ Son of man hath power upon earth to for-
“ give sins, I say unto thee, Arise, and take
“ up thy couch and walk. He immediately
“ arose, took up that whereon he lay, and
“ went forth before them all, insomuch that
“ they were all amazed and glorified God,
“ saying, We never saw it on this fashion.”

Such a miracle, which serves as a proof to another secret and invisible one, is attended with every thing that can make an impression on a reasonable soul. It is wrought in the presence of many witnesses, some of whom were secretly enemies to Jesus Christ, and jealous of his fame. The manner in which they presented the man sick of the palsy, is so new, that it is without a parallel; and shews at the same time the confidence they placed in his power and goodness, and the desire of the paralytic, and of those who bore him. Yet the manner, in which Jesus Christ speaks to him is still more new, by beginning with the remission of his sins (which did not seem to be the man's petition) without saying any thing of his disease, with which he and his bearers were wholly affected. The secret accusation of blasphemy on the part of the doctors and pharisees prove, that they were not apprehensive of any such thing before the event; and it is plain, that the less probable circumstances

PART are, the more certain is the truth, and the
IV. more it ought to banish all suspicions.

It follows plainly from thence, that Jesus Christ is God, by the very reasoning of the pharisees, which he supposes to be true by making the application to himself. He did not say that any other than God could remit sins; but he proves by a visible miracle, that he had the power of remitting sins; and what he reprimands them for, is their accusing him of blasphemy, when he says, he forgives sins, instead of relying on his word so many times confirmed by his miraculous operations. From thence it follows, that Jesus Christ was endued with an equal power over the soul and body, since he cured the maladies of both with the same facility. From thence also it may be infered, that he gives, when he pleases, internal dispositions preparative to the remission of sins, and he needs no other remedies either for the soul or body than those which he himself bestows.

For a few minutes let us behold him in that house, where he teaches, where he remits sins, where he passes sentence on men, and discerns their inmost thoughts: in that house where the throng press, and must necessarily enter to be cured; which gives it so great a resemblance of his church. But above all let us consider in this miracle the urgent and indispensable necessity of going to Jesus Christ, in spite of the obstacles which appear insurmountable. If the door is inaccessible, they must ascend the roof: they must uncover it to get at him, and

thus

thus justify what he himself said, that the CHAP.
kingdom of heaven is to be taken by violence, II.
and carry'd as a town by storm. }

ARTICLE II.

*A man born blind restored to sight:
circumstances, which ascertain the
truth of the miracle.*

“ **A**S Jesus passed by Jerusalem, he saw a
“ man which was blind from his birth.”
(The history is well known to all the world;
and my design is also visible: I do not write
to make a fulsome repetition, but to establish
the truth of this miracle; now 'tis the † history
itself that must furnish me with proofs, which
necessarily depend on the detail.) “ His dis-
“ ciples (who saw the blind man) asked him,
“ saying, Master, who did sin, this man or
“ his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus
“ answered, Neither hath this man sinned,
“ nor his parents; but that the work of God
“ should be made manifest in him. I must
“ work the works of him that sent me, while
“ it is day: the night cometh when no man
“ can work. As long as I am in the world,
“ I am the light of the world. When he had
“ thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and
“ made clay of the spittle, and he anointed
“ the eyes of the blind man with the clay,
“ and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool
“ of

† John ix. 1.

PART " of Siloam (which is by interpretation, *sent.*)
 IV. " He went his way therefore and washed, and
 " came seeing. His neighbours therefore,
 " and they † which before had seen him
 " asking alms, said, Is not this he that sat and
 " begged. Some said, This is he: others
 " said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.
 " Therefore said they unto him, How were
 " thine eyes opened? He answered and said,
 " A man that is called Jesus, made clay and
 " anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go
 " to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I
 " went and washed, and I received sight.
 " Then said they unto him, Where is he?
 " He said, I know not."

The bare recital above made in scripture terms, is sufficient, methinks, to convince unprejudiced minds, and such as have not lost all relish of truth. And I am thoroughly persuaded, that no one would resist the impression made on reason, by the circumstances and the simplicity with which they are written, if the miracle of which we are treating, were not a convincing proof of a religion which some people are desirous to render suspected.

1. The man was certainly born blind. All, who knew him, were witnesses of it; and many knew him, because he asked alms in a public street. We shall see afterwards that his father and mother affirmed it to the pharisees, tho' they dreaded their displeasure, and did

† Or, as in the Greek, " Who had before seen that he was blind."

did not care to defend a miracle, which men in power were willing to suppress.

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II.

2. The blind man does not ask to be restored to his sight, as some others did, who were become accidentally blind. Thus there is no room for suspicion on his part. And Jesus Christ, after having sent him to the pool of Siloam, did not wait for his return to receive the glory of such a miracle; so that the blind man receiving his sight, did not know whither the person who cured him was gone. Every circumstance therefore, is pure and disinterested on both sides, and there is no possibility of collusion.

3. 'Tis the question proposed by the disciples of Jesus Christ, that occasioned this miracle; and this very question is a proof that the man's blindness was from his nativity. But the answer that Jesus Christ made them is so little conformable to their notions, or to those of other men, that it is impossible it could have ever entered their minds, if they had not heard it from his mouth.

4. Jesus Christ is not satisfied with attributing the natural defect of the blind man to a particular providence; he says farther, that it is for the glory of his Father, who sent him, and to manifest his works, that this man was born blind in order to be cured. Who ever spoke thus? who could have dared to think this of Jesus Christ, if he had not said it? for 'tis observable, that it is not after the success, that he speaks thus, but 'tis by exposing himself to be contradicted (according to the opinion

PART on of men) by him, who, he says, had sent
 IV. him, that he declares the future proof of his
 mission: and what is admirable, and points out
 his divinity, he stiles himself the light of the
 world, before the miracle, which was to prove
 it; and he withdraws, and conceals himself
 after it had been evidently proved by the mi-
 racle.

5. Was it natural to imagine, that clay put
 on the eyes of a man born blind, should re-
 store him to sight? could one have framed
 such an expedient, so improbable, so contrary
 to the wish'd-for effect, so proper for de-
 stroying the sight, if the power and wisdom
 of Jesus Christ had not employed it?

6. Was there no other clay, no other expe-
 dient for making it, than the mixing it with
 the spittle of our Saviour? is it not plain from
 this, that the first origin of man was taken
 from the earth, which the hands of God fa-
 shioned, and animated by the breath of his
 mouth? The blind man wanted a natural or-
 gan: the creator bestowed it on him, by add-
 ing a new clay to the old, and thus rendering
 his work perfect:

7. But why did he send the blind man to
 the pool of Siloam? what virtue was there in
 that pool? and what mystery is concealed in its
 name, *who was sent?* why did he put clay upon
 his eyes, since it was to be removed by washing
 them? why was it only after a kind of a se-
 cond voluntary blindness, that the natural
 blindness was cured? why did his eyes open,
 when the water of the pool caused the clay to
 fall

fall off, with which they were purposely co-CHAP.
vered? Do we see in all this any trace of hu- II.
man thought? }

8. Is it likely, that a man born blind from his birth, should so easily credit what Jesus said to him; that he should obey him so punctually; that he should expose himself to public ridicule by carrying the clay on his eyes, and causing himself to be conducted to the pool of Siloam, with the hopes of being restored to his sight? are we not still even surprised at such a docility? and how then could any such thing be imagined before it happened?

One must be very little acquainted with the nature of man, to imagine him capable of counterfeiting any such thing, and to have but little discernment in respect to truth and falsehood, to be guilty of a mistake on such an occasion. Yet if any one should still deny to surrender, let him but join the pharisees, who, with utmost care, scrutinized the miracle, with an intent, if they could, to suppress it: for I do not imagine, he is more capable to examine it, than men of weight and authority of the same times, nor that he can shew as much malignity as they to obscure it.

ARTICLE III.

The efforts of the pharisees in order to eclipse this miracle, establish the truth of it.

THOSE who were informed of the man born blind, and how he was cured, brought him to the pharisees. And it was remarkable, that it was on the sabbath-day. * Then again the pharisees also asked him, how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner, do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the man that was lately blind, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth,

* John ix. 15, &c.

“ seeth, we know not; or who hath opened CHAP.
“ his eyes, we know not: he is of age, ask II.
“ him, he shall speak for himself. These
“ words spake his parents, because they fear-
“ ed the Jews: for the Jews had agreed al-
“ ready, that if any man did confess that
“ he was Christ, he should be put out of the
“ synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He
“ is of age, ask him. Then again called they
“ the man that was blind, and said unto him,
“ Give God the praise: * we know that this
“ man is a sinner. He answered and said,
“ whether he be a sinner or no, I know
“ not: one thing I know, that whereas I
“ was blind, now I see. Then said they to
“ him again, What did he to thee? how
“ opened he thine eyes? He answered them,
“ I have told you already, and ye did not
“ hear: wherefore would you hear it again?
“ will ye also be his disciples? Then they
“ reviled him, and said, Thou art his disci-
“ ple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know
“ that God spake unto Moses: as for this fel-
“ low, we know not from whence he is.
“ The man answered and said unto them,
“ Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye
“ know not from whence he is, and yet he
“ hath opened mine eyes. Since the world
“ began was it heard, that any man open-
“ ed the eyes of one that was born blind. If
“ this man were not of God, he could do
“ nothing. They answered and said unto him,
“ Thou wast al together born in sins, and

* That is, *acknowledge the truth in the presence of God.*

PART "dost thou teach us? And they cast him
IV. "out."

Is not this sufficient? did not the pharisees take the right way to discover the falsehood of the miracle? did they too easily acquiesce to the deposition of the blind man? did the father and mother seem to act in concert with their son, or to be prejudiced in behalf of Christ? was not the repeated examination of the son made by men in power, who were enemies to Christ, capable of making him commit some mistake, if he had not told the truth; or even to intimidate him, and render him less resolute in his latter evidence, if he had not been endued with more courage than his parents? was this a just method of examining the truth without prejudice, to pronounce beforehand the sentence of excommunication against those, who acknowledge Christ for the Messiah? Was not partiality and prepossession joined with the supreme authority? and, under such circumstances, was it not a strong proof of the miracles of Jesus Christ, that they were defended before his enemies, though with the certainty of attracting their hatred and revenge?

Would the pharisees have cavilled at the circumstance of the sabbath, if they could have sapped the foundation of the miracle, or rendered it doubtful? don't they themselves confirm it, by accusing Christ of having wrought it on a day of rest? did
not

not the injurious treatment of the man born blind, (who spoke with so much sagacity) demonstrate, that nothing could withstand his testimony, and the evidence of a miracle wrought on his person? by casting him out, did they in the least cancel the truth? by cursing him, did they destroy the benefit he received? by boasting themselves to be disciples of Moses, did they extenuate the reality of the miracle? on one side there appears nothing but passion and calumny; on the other, nothing but what is simple, sincere, constant and coherent, infinitely surpassing the low jealousy and malice of the pharisees, who by their utmost efforts did but illustrate the truth, and add that evidence which they vain would have wrested from it.

CHAP.
II.

A R T I C L E IV.

One such miracle is an evident proof of Christ's divinity, and of his principal mysteries: depth of Christ's designs in a miracle, which, in its circumstances, unites almost all the parts of the Christian religion.

JESUS having heard that they had excommunicated the blind man whom he had cured; "and * when he had found him,

E 2

" he

* John ix. 35, &c.

PART " he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the
 IV. " Son of God? He answered, Who is he,
 " Lord, that I might believe on him? Jesus
 " said unto him, Thou hast both * seen him,
 " and it is he that talketh with thee. And
 " he said, Lord, I believe. And he worship-
 " ped him."

See the purport of the miracle. It is operated to prove Jesus Christ the Son of God; to oblige us to believe in him, to induce us to worship him. It is a proof of all the essential points of Religion; and its evidence, being palpable and obvious to sense, confirms the mysteries which are above human comprehension, such as those of the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption of man, and of others which have their dependence on these. The light of one single miracle, operated in order to establish truth, verifies all these; and it is Christ himself, who prompts us to make this use of it, by requiring the man born blind to believe in him, as the Son of God, and to adore him in this quality with an unlimited worship.

Jesus adds: † " For judgment I am come into
 " this world: that they which see not, might
 " see; and that they which see, might be
 " made blind. And some of the pharisees,
 " which were with him, heard these words,
 " and said unto him, Are we blind also? Je-
 " sus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye
 " should

* *Vidisti*, put for the present according to the Hebrews; for it does not appear that this man had seen Christ before that time.

† John ix. 39, &c.

"should have no sin: but now ye say, We
see; therefore your sin remaineth."

CHAP.
II.

These last words discover the whole extent of Christ's design in this miracle, in which are all the circumstances united, and which give to those that appear singular an additional beauty, as well as certainty. These instruct us, that Christ, as Eternal Wisdom, had, from the beginning of the world, made choice of the man born blind to represent all mankind, Jews as well as Gentiles, who were all blind by birth, and who could not obtain their cure either by the law, or natural philosophy, but by faith alone in the Messiah; not such a Messiah as the Jews imagine, but such as the prophets foretold: and it is for this reason that the blindness of that man, who was reduced to want (and who by this second characteristic points out the misery and indigence of all men) is not the effect of his own particular sin or of his parents, because it is a general and universal symbol.

None but the very hand which fashioned man, was capable of repairing him, and of restoring what he had lost. A new earth must be tempered to repair the defects of the clay, and the mouth of Wisdom must join with his hand in retouching it.

But it is not by restoring to man that sublime understanding, and that exalted wisdom which he lost by sin, that the Word made flesh designed to enlighten him. On the contrary, he adds to his natural blindness a voluntary and artificial one. He demands of him

PART the sacrifice of his understanding and reason to
 IV. restore him to sight, and he applied to his
 eyes already closed, a remedy, which seemed
 to threaten a quite contrary effect. Instead of
 appearing to him in the majesty of a Cre-
 ator, he conceals himself under the frailties
 incident to sinful man. He only shews the
 weakness of an infant, the disgrace and igno-
 miny of the cross, the inability of a man
 dead and buried. He put the clay upon his
 eyes; he obliges him to carry it without be-
 ing ashamed: and he promises him, that it
 will become a principle of light to him, if he
 washed himself at the pool of Siloam, and
 received, with faith, the baptism, whose water
 was dyed with the blood of him that was
 sent.

In effect, the recompence of such a faith, is
 in discovering the admirable riches of wisdom,
 fortitude, and sanctity, in those mysteries,
 which have the appearance only of imbecillity
 and folly: in finding an infinite gain for the sa-
 crifice of reason and human wisdom; and in
 perceiving, that he would for ever have remain-
 ed in darkness, had he been incredulous or
 disobedient,

Those who are wise in their own eyes de-
 ny him. They value themselves on their
 knowledge. They dispute, they reason, they
 are suspicious of all the miracles, and of all
 the facts which establish religion. They de-
 mand reason in every thing; they would have
 the mysteries labour under no obscurity: in
 fine, they say, as they have eyes, they desire

to see; and are ignorant that thus they incur CHAP.
the judgment, which Christ exercises on the II.
proud even in this life, by delivering them
up to their own darkness, which they count
light; and by suffering their incredulity to
render their sins irremissible, whereas faith in
their Saviour would obliterate them. "For
" judgment *, says he, I am come into this
" world; that they which see not, might see;
" and that they which see, might be made
" blind. If ye owned yourselves blind, you
" would have no sin;" as faith would have
remitted it. But the presumption, which in-
clines you to imagine ye see, causes you
to remain in sin by concealing the remedy.
It infinitely behoves those who willingly
harbour doubts concerning faith, to hearken
with fear, or at least with respect, to these
words which so nearly concern them. And
very unhappy will they be, if they are more
inclined to feel, than to believe the truth.

* John ix. 39, &c.

ARTICLE V.

Resurrection of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, preceded by the cure of a woman only by touching the hem of Christ's garment. Certainty of both miracles.

WHEN Jesus, after having delivered the possessed from a legion of devils (whom we have already spoke of) passed over from the country of the Gergesenes to the other side by the sea of Tiberias. "† A ruler of the
 " synagogue, Jairus by name, sought him,
 " and when he saw him, he fell at his feet:
 " and he besought him greatly, saying, My
 " little daughter lieth at the point of death;
 " come and lay thy hands on her, that she
 " may be healed, and she shall live. Jesus
 " went with him and much people followed
 " him, and thronged him. And a certain
 " woman, which had an issue of blood twelve
 " years, and had suffered many things of many
 " physicians, and had spent all that she
 " had, and was nothing better'd, but rather
 " grew worse: when she had heard of Jesus,
 " came in the press behind, and touched his
 " garment*; for she said, If I may touch
 " but his cloaths, I shall be whole; and
 " straight-

† Mark v. 22.

* "And touched the hem of his garment." Matth. ix. 20.

“ straightways the fountain of her blood was CHAP.
“ dried up; and she felt in her body, that she II.
“ was healed of that plague. And Jesus im-
“ mediately knowing in himself, that vir-
“ tue had gone out of him, turned him about
“ in the press and said, Who touched my
“ cloaths? His disciples said unto him, Thou
“ seest the multitude thronging thee, and
“ sayest thou, who touched me? And he
“ looked round about to see her that had done
“ this thing: but the woman fearing and trem-
“ bling, and knowing what was done in her,
“ came, and fell down before him, and told
“ him all the truth. And he said unto her,
“ Daughter, thy faith hath made thee
“ whole: go in peace, and be whole of thy
“ plague. While he yet spake, there came
“ from the ruler of the synagogue’s house,
“ certain which said, Thy daughter is dead,
“ why troublest thou the master any further?
“ As soon as Jesus had heard the word that
“ was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the
“ synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe;
“ and he suffered no man to follow him, save
“ Peter and James, and John the brother of
“ James. And he cometh to the house of
“ the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the
“ tumult, and them that wept, and wailed
“ greatly. And when he was come in; he
“ saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and
“ weep? the damsel is not dead but sleepeth.
“ And they laughed him to scorn. But when
“ he had put them all out, he taketh the fa-
“ ther and the mother of the damsel, and them
“ that

PART " that were with him ; and entereth in where
 IV. " the damsel was lying, and took the damsel
 " by the hand, and said unto her, Tabitha
 " Cumi, which is being interpreted, Damsel I say
 " unto thee, arise. And straightway the dam-
 " sel arose and walked, for she was of the age
 " of twelve years. And they were astonished
 " with a great astonishment. And he charged
 " them straightly that no man should know
 " it, and commanded that something should
 " be given her to eat."

These two miracles (one of which is preparatory to the other) are * in such a manner connected together, that they cannot be separated, and they have both something very singular, and infallible marks of truth. I begin with the first. Was it natural that Christ in the midst of a crowd pressed on every side, should discern the particular touch of the hem of his garment, and that this touch should instantly heal an incurable disease ? was the disposition of the woman, bashful on account of her disease, yet positive of her cure, who thought herself unworthy of asking it publicly, but excusable if she secretly stole it ; was this, I say, a common disposition, or does it easily enter ones mind ? did the manner in which Christ seemed to be uneasy about knowing who touched him, and to condemn that liberty, at a time when the throng greatly pressed him ; did it agree with the idea, which the evangelists have given in other places

* " Jesus arose and followed him, and behold a woman
 " which had an issue of blood &c." Matth. ix. 19.

places of his goodness and knowledge, which CHAP. II.
could have easily conjectured it? As this woman was cured, was it necessary to distinguish her from the crowd, in order to tell her, it was she? How comes it that he was so attentive to publish a secret miracle; he, who a little while after so explicitly prohibits the miracle of a resurrection to be divulged, tho' it was of greater concern and more divine than the cure of a single infirmity? In short, why was Christ desirous of shewing that they could come very near him, and even press him, without touching him? was it easy to make such a distinction? and is Christ's design in making it, or instructing his disciples to do the same, even now within the compass of all capacities? This is in part what puts this miracle above all suspicion, and establishes the truth of it.

With regard to the second, every thing contributes to render it indubitable. Jairus, who is mentioned, is ruler of a synagogue of one of the towns of Galilee, and consequently well known. He lays himself prostrate at the feet of Jesus Christ, before a crowd of people who attended him, and requests the cure of his only daughter †, who was at the point of death. Whilst Christ went with him, he had notice that his daughter was dead, and that it was needless for Christ to go any farther. All this is simple, natural and public; and the miracle wrought by the way, is
a proof.

† He had one only daughter. Luke viii. 42.

PART a proof that it was performed before a crowd
IV. of witnesses.

It is not Jairus that demands the resurrection of his daughter; on the contrary, he acquiesces in the advice of his people, and entreats Christ not to give himself a needless trouble. He was not therefore in confederacy with them, in order to counterfeit a seeming death. Christ (who exhorts him to believe and hope for her resurrection, as he wished for her health) could be grounded only on a power which he was assured of, and of which he was master, since he offered it without being asked, and demanded an absolute reliance. During the rest of the way the death appeared not only certain, but was public, though neither Christ nor Jairus forwarded its publication. Christ, instead of exaggerating the truth thereof, treated it as a simple sleep: his expression admitting a double meaning, became the subject of raillery to those who understood it literally, and who looked upon it as extravagant with relation to a death, which was unquestionable. The house was in tears, every part was filled with lamentations. The people hired for the sake of heightening the mournful scene by their solemn music, were actually busied in that lugubrious office. Christ is obliged to command silence, and to put them out. Yet he was so little desirous of acquiring any honour from a resurrection, the necessity of which he endeavoured to conceal, by saying that the girl was not dead but slept, that he kept only his three disciples with him; and on the other
side

James Gordon Heron

side he desired only the parents of the girl to CHAP. attest the fact, being unwilling that the mi- II. racle should be doubtful, yet was satisfied with confirming the truth by a precise number of witnesses ordained by the law, two on the side of Jairus, and three on his own.

He subjoins to this moderation a positive prohibition to publish the miracle, which in of astonishing a manner manifested his power over death, a miracle which cost him but a single word, and was so efficacious, that in an instant she walked, and was as formerly in a condition of taking sustenance. Such a prohibition must convey to us how much superior he was to the action he came to perform, how he despised the admiration of men, and insinuates a lesson of humility to his disciples, to whom a little while before he manifested with complacency the holy dispositions of a woman bashful and trembling, yet replete with faith, and from whom * he concealed his own glory, or commanded them to conceal it; in order that they might discern between the edification and utility of their brethren, and their personal honour.

* He concealed it from those whom he had not taken with him, and he ordered the rest to conceal it by stopping their mouths.

PART
IV.

CHAP. III.

Continuation of the same subject : the miracles of Jesus Christ are unquestionable, and convincing proofs of his divinity. 1. Resurrection of the widow's only son at Naim, proved by circumstances which can admit of no suspicion. 2. Resurrection of Lazarus : certain proofs of his death. 3. Manifest proofs of his resurrection. 4. Lawful and necessary consequences of such a miracle, which confirm the whole, by demonstrating that Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. Answer to an objection.

ARTICLE I.

Resurrection of the widow's only son at Naim, proved by circumstances which can admit of no suspicion.

THE resurrection, I am going to speak of, is not the first miracle which Christ wrought of this kind, for he had already raised from the dead a young man hard by Naim, a town of Galilee, with circumstances still more astonishing and public. † “ Now
 “ when he came nigh the gate of the city,
 “ behold, there was a dead man carried out,
 “ the only son of his mother, and she was a
 “ widow : and much people of the city was
 “ with

† Luke vii. 12.

“ with her. And when the Lord saw her, CHAP.
“ he had compassion on her, and said unto III.
“ her, Weep not. And he came and touched
“ the bier, (and they that bare him stood still)
“ and he said, Young man, I say unto thee,
“ arise. And he that was dead sat up, and
“ began to speak: and he delivered him to his
“ mother. And there came fear on all: and
“ they glorified God, saying, † That a great
“ prophet is risen up among us, and that God
“ had visited his people.”

What is there here that the most suspicious person could distrust? Christ came from Capernaum, where he had healed the servant of the centurion. He arrived at the time of the funeral: he found him at the gate of the city, attended by a great number of the inhabitants. The mother, who had lost her only son, was dissolved in tears; the tomb was prepared; they were going to put the corpse into it. Where is there room for deceit? Or if in such circumstances the young Man's death be not certain, how must one be more positively assured? and if it be true, how can the resurrection be doubted, under the same circumstances and before the same identical witnesses?

But how do I know, (will perhaps be said by a timorous man, and one that is wavering in his faith) whether his death and resurrection be faithfully related, and whether they were real? After so many proofs of the sincerity of the evangelists, and of the truth of the miracles of Christ and his apostles, there can
be

† Luke vii. 16.

PART be no room to return to this original doubt:

IV. nevertheless I am very ready to consider it, provided that we do not carry this suspicion too far, and extend it to very minute circumstances, or to facts which appeared contrary to the design of the evangelists, who might have had some interest in suppressing them for the glory of Jesus Christ.

It is said, || that the fame of this miracle was every where promulged, as well as the reflection of the people, that a great prophet appeared, and that God had visited his people; that the disciples of Saint John reasoned about him, and that he appointed two of them to send to Christ, and say, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? (They indeed came to Jesus) and said to him, "John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

Such a question proposed by public deputies to Jesus Christ before the multitude, seemed a recantation of the ancient testimonies which Saint John had so often given of him; or at least appeared to imply a doubt and hesitation, and of course a change, in his sentiment. Christ, therefore in order to prevent the unjust consequence they might draw from it, spoke greatly of the constancy and resolution of Saint John after the departure of his disciples, and of the divine light which enlightened him, superior to that of the prophets. Such a deputation and question had not the
air

air of people zealous for the glory of Christ; CHAP.
and we may boldly affirm, that they did III.
not counterfeit them. We must therefore
look upon them as certain; and consequently
the miracle, which was the occasion of them,
must be evident.

This becomes still clearer, when we examine what Christ did in the presence of Saint John's deputies, and what he said to them: for he cured many diseased in their sight, delivered those who were possessed with malignant spirits, gave sight to many that were blind, and he added, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." It is not said, that Christ did then actually raise any one from the dead, as is affirmed of the other miracles which he performed in their presence. But the resurrection of the young man of Naim was recent; it was of that they spoke with astonishment, and with a secret jealousy of their master; and it is distinctly pointed out in these words, "Go your way, and tell what things ye have seen and heard."

If they will yet assert, that at that very time some one had been raised from the dead, I shall not oppose it: the resurrection performed at Naim will thereby be only the more strongly evinced: and it suffices me to observe, that the miracles wrought in the presence of Saint John's deputies, who were already distrustful and jealous,

PART must have been very astonishing and beyond
 I V. all doubt, to have been able to convince them;
 and that the resurrection of the dead which
 happened in their sight, or within their memory, must have been very sure and well evinced, to constrain them to prefer Christ to their master, to advance instead of extenuating his glory, and to acknowledge him for the expected Messiah, instead of considering him as a rival of John the Baptist; for this is the import of those words which Christ subjoins, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." That is to say, in whom my miracles and glory shall not create a sentiment of envy or sorrow, and who shall not be secretly afflicted with what edifies and consoles others.

A R T I C L E II.

Resurrection of Lazarus: certain proofs of his death.

I AM persuaded, that whilst I have been occupied in proving the truth of the resurrection of the young man at Naim, most people think on that of Lazarus, whose fame was much greater, and the consequences more important; and it is time indeed to examine it, but in a simple and natural manner, suitable to the capacity of the multitude, and of which the learned and illiterate might be equal judges.

For

For this purpose it will only be necessary to establish clearly the truth of Lazarus's death, and in the same manner to prove his resurrection, by shewing the necessary connection of these two events with circumstances which could neither be forged nor suspected. CHAP. III.

When they celebrated at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, † “ The Jews assembled themselves before Jesus in Solomon's porch, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me . . . I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones to stone him; and Jesus said, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father, for which of these works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them: If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do . . . believe that the Father is in me and I in him. Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hands, and went away beyond Jordan, into the place where John abode when he baptized.” Nothing can be more circumstantiated and sincere than this recital, which not only proves Christ's absence, but his distance from Bethany and Jerusalem during the sickness of Lazarus.

F 2

When

† John x. 22.

PART When he was beyond Jordan, Mary and

IV. Martha, sisters of Lazarus, sent unto him, saying, † “ Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.

“ When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” This is a plain and precise prophecy, which will be decided by the event. But in such circumstances it cannot be suspected. We shall see in the sequel, whether the Son of God received any glory from such a sickness. “ After this news Jesus abode two days still in the same place where he was; then after that, saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee,” (it is therefore true, that they intended it, and that Christ withdrew to avoid it) “ and goest thou thither again? “ Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? if any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not. And he added, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. “ Howbeit Jesus spake of his death; but they thought that he had spoken of taking rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there (to the intent ye may believe) nevertheless let us go unto him.”

Who

† John xi. 3.

Who can doubt but the affair happened CHAP.
as here related? Was it the interest of III.

Christ to suffer Lazarus to die, if he was incapable of raising him from the dead? and if he intended to counterfeit raising him from the dead, was it compatible with his prudence to delay his return so long a time? In short, was it fit to engage himself so positively to restore him to life, before he had arrived at the place, and had examined the whole affair? “When Jesus came, he found that he had
“lain in the grave four days already. And
“as Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about
“fifteen * furlongs off, many of the Jews
“came to Martha and Mary, to comfort
“them concerning the death of their brother.” His death was therefore public at Jerusalem, as a great many came from Bethany to console the sisters; and all the people knew how long Lazarus had been in the tomb. How could he make choice of such a company, such a place, such a neighbourhood as Jerusalem, a family so well known, if he designed to impose on the public?

“ Martha, as soon as she heard that
“Jesus was coming, met him, and said, Lord,
“if thou hadst been here, my brother had
“not died. But I know, that even now,
“whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will
“give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother
“shall rise again. Martha saith unto
“him, I know, that he shall rise in the

F 3

“ re-

* A little more than half a league. Eight furlongs go to a mile, and three miles make one league.

PART " resurrection at the last day. Jesus said un-
 IV. " to her, I am the resurrection, and the life.
 " He that believeth in me, though he were
 " dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever li-
 " veth, and believeth in me, shall never die.
 " Believest thou this? She saith unto him,
 " Yea, Lord: I believe, that thou art the
 " Christ the Son of God, which should come
 " into the World." Christ had not as yet
 spoke in so nervous and precise a manner:
 I am, saith he, the resurrection and the life.
 He expects that Martha should, without hesi-
 tation, believe and acknowledge him to be the
 Son of the living God; and he assures her,
 that her brother shall be raised from the dead,
 not only at the last day, but within a few mo-
 ments. If this last thing comes to pass, how
 can the residue be disbelieved? But it is that
 which obliges me to inspect diligently whether
 Lazarus was dead, and whether the fact be
 as certain as the evangelist has related.

Martha, after the confession of faith which
 has been mentioned, went to tell her sister se-
 cretly: " The Master is come, and calleth for
 " thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose
 " quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus
 " was not yet come into the town, but was in
 " that place where Martha met him." A cir-
 cumstance purposely remarked, in order to re-
 move all suspicion of collusion or acting in
 concert; and to shew, that every thing was
 publicly performed, and in the sight of the
 whole multitude.

" The

“ The Jews, which were with Martha in CHAP.
“ the house, and comforted her, when they III.
“ saw that she rose up hastily, and went out, }
“ followed her, saying, She goeth unto the
“ grave, to weep there.” These Jews afford
me great pleasure, and their testimony strongly
encourages me. The opinion that they had
of Mary, confirms to me that every thing was
serious, and her grief intense: but upon the
whole I am glad they followed her, because
they are going to be present at the sequel.
“ When Mary was come to the place where
“ Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at
“ his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou
“ hadst been here, my brother had not died.
“ When Jesus therefore saw her weeping,
“ and the Jews also weeping which came with
“ her, he groaned in the spirit and was trou-
“ bled, and said, Where have ye laid him?
“ They say unto him, Lord, come and see.
“ Jesus wept.” Who could withstand the
like circumstances? and what jealousy would
not vanish at the tears of the standers-by,
and even of Jesus Christ? nevertheless I wait
for their going to the sepulchre. The sight of
such a place will more strongly affect the
senses; and as we are about verifying his death,
it is the sepulchre which must convince us of
it.

“ The Jews, when they saw Jesus weeping,
“ said, Behold, how he loved him. And
“ some of them said, Could not this man,
“ which opened the eyes of the blind, have
“ caused that even this man should not have
“ died?

PART "died?" Such a manner of reasoning is

IV. with me of great moment; for it proves that
 Christ was really affected, and that his grief
 was considered by the Jews, not only as the
 effect of friendship, but as an indication of
 weakness and impotence with regard to Laza-
 rus's death; which thoroughly convinces me,
 that they looked upon it as unquestionable and
 past all remedy. I make a great point of the
 man that was born blind: it is a cogent testi-
 mony, and which does not proceed from suspi-
 cious persons. "Jesus again groaning in himself,
 " cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a
 " stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away
 " the stone. Martha, the sister of him that
 " was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this
 " time he stinketh; for he hath been dead
 " four days." I confess, that I did not ex-
 pect this remonstrance on Martha's part, who
 was so full of faith, and to whom Christ
 had expressly said, That her brother should be
 raised from the dead; and whom he had as-
 sured, that himself was the resurrection and the
 life, demanding of her to believe him. But I
 conceive, how the difficulties staggered her,
 when she compared them in that decisive mo-
 ment with the design of Christ, and how
 she herself was startled at the obstacles which
 he must surmount; and it is her fear which
 banishes mine, because I am convinced that the
 whole is true and sincere, and that corruption
 had already disfigured his body, which had
 been four days in the grave. . . . " Jesus saith
 " unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou
 " wouldst

“ wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory
“ of God? Then they took away the stone
“ from the place where the dead was laid.
“ And Jesus lift up his eyes and said, Father,
“ I thank thee, that thou hast heard me. And
“ I knew that thou hearest me always: but
“ because of the people which stand by, I said
“ it, that they may believe, that thou hast
“ sent me. And when he had thus spoken,
“ he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come
“ forth. And he that was dead came forth,
“ bound hand and foot with grave-cloths;
“ and his face was bound about with a napkin.
“ Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let
“ him go.”

CHAP.
III.

A R T I C L E III.

*Manifest proofs of the resurrection of
Lazarus.*

BEFORE I give loose to the joys of so
wonderful a resurrection, I draw near to
consider Lazarus as yet untied. I examine
the napkin, which would have stifled him,
had he been living. I view his arms and legs
tied with fillets after the Jewish custom, and
I cannot comprehend what virtue forced him
out of the tomb, as he had not within him-
self any principle of motion. In short, I see
when they uncover his face, that it is full of
life and vigour, and that he only waits for the
liberty of walking, which he speedily will en-

PART. joy; and then I prostrate myself before him, who

IV. in so wonderful and unheard-of a manner hath proved himself to be the Messiah, sent by his heavenly Father, and that he is truly the resurrection and the life, since he animated, by a single word, a carcass already corrupted.

I would only have so extraordinary a resurrection to be attended with consequences, and that these consequences should make such a part of the history of Christ, and of the Jews, as to be inseparable from both. I continue then to read, and I meet with still more than I desired.—“Many of the Jews (saith Saint John *) “being present at the “spectacle with all the apostles, who came “to see Mary and Martha, and to comfort “them, and had seen the things which Jesus “did, believed on him. But some of them “went their ways to the pharisees, and told “them this miracle. Then gathered the chief “priests and the pharisees a council, and said, “What do we? for this man doth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men “will believe on him: and the Romans shall “come, and take away both our place and “nation.—Caiphas the high priest said, It is “expedient that one man should die for the “people, and that the whole nation perish “not. Then from that day forth the death of “Jesus Christ was resolved, and they took “council together to put him to death. And “Jesus therefore went thence unto a country “near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim,

* John xi. 45, &c.

“ Ephraim, and there continued with his
“ disciples.”

CHAP.
III.

The chief priest and the council did not venture to examine the miracle, as they had done with respect to the blind man. The consideration of Lazarus and of his sisters, who were no mean people, the number of witnesses, who were likewise people of distinction, and who had filled Jerusalem with the news at their return, and the fear of adding a farther degree of evidence to a miracle which they were desirous to suppress, if they seemed to doubt it; induced them to resolve on the death of Christ, and thus to put an end to his miracles. The words of Caiaphas “ That it was expedient that one
“ man should die for the people;” and the retreat of Christ towards the desert, are proofs of this deliberation.

Then Jesus, six days before the passover*, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was
“ which had been dead, whom he raised from
“ the dead. There they made him a supper,
“ and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of
“ them that sat at the table with him. Then
“ took Mary a pound of ointment, of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of
“ Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair:
“ and the house was filled with the odour of
“ the ointment. Then one of his disciples,
“ Judas Iscariot, who should betray him, said,
“ Why was not this ointment sold for three
“ hundred pence, and given to the poor?

“ This

* John xii. 1, &c. Matth. xxvi. 14. Mark xiv. 10.

PART " This he said, not that he cared for the poor,

IV. " but because he was a thief, and had the bag,

~" and bare what was put therein. This op-

" portunity determined the traitor to go to

" the chief priests and say unto them, What

" will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto

" you? And they covenanted with him for

" thirty pieces of silver.".... These are facts

of the greatest importance. Jesus quits his

retreat about the time of the passover, when

Jerusalem was filled with an infinite number of

Jews: He comes to the house of a man well

known, † called Simon the Leper, because

he had been infected with that distemper;

he makes ready a supper for him. Laza-

rus is one of the guests; Martha and Ma-

ry his sisters were attendants; and the lat-

ter pours out a precious perfume upon his

feet, and afterwards upon his head. This pro-

fusion displeased Judas; he goes to the priests

to sell his master; and receives for it thirty

pieces of silver. How is it possible to separate

these circumstances? how to deny the supper?

how can one contradict the effusion of spike-

nard? Lazarus was one of the guests: can his

preceding death be disowned? can his resur-

rection be attested in a more solemn manner?

did not Judas himself, a sordid, murmuring

traitor, absolutely confirm it? is his crime a

fiction? can the occasion of his crime be

counterfeit? can the reward which satisfied the

traitor be imaginary? and must one be no

ways

† Saint Matthew and Saint Mark in the places quoted, say, that it was with him Jesus supped.

ways moved by the prophecy of *Zacharias, CHAP. III.
who so plainly foretold it for so many ages
before? }

But there is something more convincing :
“ † Much people of the Jews knew that he
“ was at Bethany, and they came from Jeru-
“ salem thither, not for Jesus’ sake only, but
“ that they might see Lazarus also, whom he
“ had raised from the dead. But the chief
“ priests consulted, that they might put La-
“ zarus to death ; because that by reason of
“ him many of the Jews went away, and be-
“ lieved on Jesus.” The curiosity of those,
who came to Bethany, is a natural conse-
quence of the truth of Lazarus’s resurrecti-
on ; and their belief in Christ, tho’ dependent
on the grace of God, proceeds from the same
source. Both one and the other must en-
rage the priests and pharisees, who were Christ’s
enemies ; and though I did not expect a re-
solution so cruel and mad, as that of de-
priving Lazarus of life, as if they could
impede his being restored to life a second time by
Christ, I perceive in such a design suggested
through despair, and in every thing else pub-
lic proofs of the miracle, which excites the
curiosity of a great many, and induces some of
them to believe, and provokes others who
could not suppress it.

In fine, “ † The people that were come to
“ the feast (of the passover) when they heard
“ that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took
“ branches

* Zach. xi. 12. Matth. xxvii.

† John xii. 9, &c. † Ibid. verse 12.

PART “ branches of palm-trees, and went forth to
 IV. “ meet him, and cried, Blessed is the King
 “ of Israel, that cometh in the name of the
 “ Lord. The people therefore that were
 “ with him, when he called Lazarus out of
 “ his grave, and raised him from the dead,
 “ bare record. For this cause the people met
 “ him, for that they heard, that he had done
 “ this miracle. The pharisees therefore said
 “ among themselves, Perceive ye, how ye
 “ prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone
 “ after him.” Is it possible to disown, that
 Christ made his entrance to Jerusalem as re-
 lated by the evangelists? must we look upon,
 as fabulous, the concourse of people who met
 him with olive branches and loud acclama-
 tions? can we separate so notorious an event
 from the important circumstances which are
 blended with it in the evangelical relation?
 and can one offer a more natural reason of
 such a concourse and triumph, than the re-
 surrection of Lazarus, of which many were
 witnesses, and which the whole multitude
 already believed?

As to myself, after so many proofs of every
 kind, one added to another, I would only ask,
 of whosoever is not thoroughly satisfied, what
 then would convince him of the certainty of a
 resurrection? I would entreat him to ruminate
 within himself the circumstances, and proofs
 which he would submit to; and to consider
 well the means, which he would make use of in
 order, first to be assured of his death, and af-
 terwards of his resurrection. And I am tho-
 roughly

roughly convinced, that after having wearied CHAP.
himself with reflection, he would never be able III.
to set either of them in so clear a light, as the
death and resurrection of Lazarus; and this
truth, which seems unsatisfactory to him, will
exceed every thing which his imagination would
strive to substitute in its stead.

A R T I C L E IV.

*Lawful and necessary consequences of
such a miracle, which proves the
whole, by proving that Christ is the
resurrection and the life.----Answer
to an objection.*

AM I then to blame in representing to a so-
ber and prudent mind, first, the manner
in which the divine providence facilitated the
examination of the christian religion in the rela-
tion of a single miracle, which invincibly
proves, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, since
he publicly declared, that he wrought the mi-
racle to demonstrate it, and that he was the
resurrection and the life, (that is to say) the
principle of both, and consequently God, since
before he performed it, he ascribes to himself
these divine qualities, and requires us to po-
sitively believe, that he is endued with them?
Is not the whole proved if Christ is the Mes-
siah and God? and after this is there any
thing

PART thing more incumbent on us than to listen to
IV. and obey him?

Am I to blame in representing to him, in the second place, how inexcusable he would be, if he persisted to deny a miracle, the truth of which is so obvious, and so essentially connected with a great number of circumstances, which cannot be doubted, without sapping the whole foundation of history? Am I to blame in demanding of him, whether he takes prudence for his guide, when he inclines rather to expose himself to eternal misery, than to credit so authentic a fact? or whether 'tis making a proper use of his reason to continue thus sceptical on various points of religion, after being convinced by this single proof, that all his doubts are groundless; since they are all here ultimately and radically confuted?

But is it possible, he may say, that the resurrection of a man buried for four days, happening so near Jerusalem, should not convert every body? I answer *, that many were affected with it, and believed in Christ; but that this faith, if sincere, was not the effect of the external miracle, which was only the occasion of it; that the people were prepared to believe, as appeared by the haste they were in to meet him, and by the acclamations with which they received him, when he made his entrance into Jerusalem, but that they were obstructed in the pursuit of their inclination by the faction of the priests and pharisees, who possessed

* As has been mentioned John chap. xi. 45. and ch. xii. 11.

possessed the principal authority in religiousCHAP. affairs; that the ignominy of the cross, entire- III. ly opposite to their prejudices and expectations, afterwards threw a veil across their eyes resembling that which concealed from their hearts the knowledge of Jesus Christ; that the priests and pharisees had already so openly opposed him, that his miracles only served to increase their resentment and render him the more odious; that their hatred displayed itself when they imagined themselves despised, that is to say, when their hypocrisy was unmasked; that the vices, which mostly blind the understanding, and offuscate the heart, are pride and envy, when the merit and virtue of an extraordinary man throws them into despair, that their passions can only be satiated but by cruel and violent designs; and that it was this way the deep counsels of the heavenly Father were to be accomplished in his Son, agreeable to the prophets, and according to the remark made by Saint John †: “ Tho’
“ Jesus had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:
“ That the saying of Esaias the prophet might
“ be fulfilled, which he spake: Lord, who hath
“ believed our report? and to whom hath the
“ arm of the Lord been revealed? There-
“ fore they could not believe, because that
“ Esaias said again, He hath blinded their
“ eyes, and hardened their heart; that they

† Chap. xii. 37, &c.

PART " should not see with their eyes, nor under-

IV. " stand with their heart, and be converted,
 " and I should heal them. These things said
 " Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake
 " of him."

This is sufficient to silence every body. It was foretold, that the Jews would be incredulous, and would behold the greatest miracles without being affected; and that through blindness of heart they would make no use of what seemed the most probable to move them: wherefore it would have been a prejudice against Jesus Christ, if most of the Jews, struck with the evidence of his miracles, had believed; for the prophets had foretold the contrary, and assigned † the almost general incredulity of the Jews, in respect to him, as a mark to know the true Messiah.

† See the second part, chap. 15, 16, 17.


CHAP IV.

Farther proofs of the truth of the miracles wrought by Christ. 1st Proof: A power bestowed by Christ on his apostles, and on seventy-two disciples, to work miracles in his name. 2d Proof: The calumnies of the Jews in cavilling at certain circumstances of the miracles of Christ, demonstrate their truth. 3d Proof: the jealousy of the inhabitants of Nuzareth. 4th Proof: The reproaches which Christ made to the towns where he had performed many miracles, invincibly establish their certainty and evidence. 5th Proof: Ancient tradition of the Jews, which allows the miracles of Jesus Christ, but attributes them to the pronouncing of the name of God, or to magic. Confutation of the Jewish calumny with respect to magic.

ARTICLE I.

First proof. Power bestowed by Christ on his apostles, and on seventy-two disciples, of working miracles in his name.

I Should be very prolix, if I attempted to shew that many other miracles of Jesus Christ bore unquestionable characteristics of truth, and that the more we dwell on the circumstances, the more obvious will their cer-

PART tainty appear; but I cannot forbear taking notice of one that is very singular; and till then
 IV.  unheard of, which contains an infinity of others; I mean the power that Christ invested his apostles with, to perform miracles in his name, when he sent them, two by two, to preach the gospel in all Judea. "He gave them, says Saint Matthew † one of the twelve that was sent, power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease. Preach, says he, that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

Was there ever an example of such a commission? and in what terms was it bestowed? every word is a source of prodigies. All nature submits to men hitherto unknown: death is comprehended within the extent of their power, and devils themselves acknowledge their sovereignty. What then must he be, who not only enjoys an absolute power over all nature, but even subjects it to his servants? must we demand miracles of him, who, by a single word, bestows on his ministers the power of doing in his name every thing, which they shall judge necessary? and can we doubt his being the source of the whole power, which he confers on his ambassadors, since to communicate it to them, no more was necessary than the mere act of his will.

But

† Mat. x. 1, 7, 8.

But is it true (they will say) that he actually CHAP.
did communicate this power? the proof is easy. IV.

We need only enquire of the apostles whether their commission was ineffectual, or whether it was serious and real? "When they went out," says Saint Mark*, they preached that men should repent. They cast out many devils; they anoint with oil many that were sick, and healed them. "They went," says Saint Luke†, through the towns preaching the gospel, and healing every where." This is evident, the effect corresponds with the words: the name of Christ alone every where performed miracles.

And indeed it would have been, on his part, a very certain method of destroying the confidence which the apostles had placed in him, to enjoin them every where to cure diseases, lepers, those that were possessed, and even to raise the dead, by invoking his name, and afterwards to exhibit the imbecillity of that impotent name by many essays, which could never succeed. The apostles would have been a thousand times convinced, by their own experience, that the power he conferred on them, was only imaginary. They would have reasonably concluded from thence, that the gospel, which they preached, was false. And at their return they must have complained of being so many times exposed to ridicule and public shame, when they rashly attempted to cure diseases by a fruitless method.

G 3

These

* Mark vi. 12, 13. † Luke ix. 6.

PART These reflections, substantial in themselves,
 IV. receive an additional strength from the second mission, which Christ made of seventy-two disciples†, whom he sent two by two as the apostles, to go before him into those places, where he designed to preach in person. For he gave them the same instructions, and the same power of working miracles, as to the apostles; and it is absolutely contrary to all probability, that these new ambassadors should receive a similar commission, if the first failed of success, and if it had been attended with confusion to the twelve apostles, and to Christ himself: who would have overturned his affairs and discredited his doctrine, if he had sent impostors and fanatics before him; and would have prejudiced the minds of people against him, instead of preparing them with docility to receive him; if two missions, one after another, had performed nothing extraordinary and marvellous in his name, though they had greatly exalted his efficacy and power.

Wherefore it is written, that the seventy-two disciples experienced the promises of Christ to be exact and true; and “*they returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And Jesus said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.—Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

† Luke x. 1.—9.

* Ibid. x. 17, &c.

“heaven.” By these last words Christ adds CHAP. IV.
the utmost degree of certainty to the miracles, and to the power conferred on his deputies: for by exhorting them not to place their confidence therein, and not to make them the chief object of their joy, he supposes the miracles equally known by all, and liable to inspire his disciples with a secret elation of heart, if they were not checked by the greater expectancies, and more substantial benefits promised to the humble and meek.

ARTICLE II.

Second proof. The calumnies of the Jews, in cavilling at certain circumstances of the miracles of Christ, demonstrate their truth.

WERE it necessary, after so many proofs of the miracles of Christ, to summon his enemies to evidence the truth thereof, we should see, that they have been constrained to acknowledge it, and that their very calumnies declare it. * “He casts out devils, they say, but it is by the prince of devils. He does on the sabbath-day, what is unlawful †. He commands a paralytic of thirty eight years to arise and carry his bed on a day
G 4 “ of

* “The scribes said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils he casteth out devils.” Mark iii. 22. Luke xi. 15.

† “Wherefore the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath-day.”

PART “ of rest ; is this justifiable † ? He moistens clay
 IV. “ on the same day in order to open the eyes
 “ of a man born blind: Is it not evident, that
 “ such a man was not sent from God || ?
 “ He restores a withered hand; and † straitens
 “ on that holy day, a woman for many years
 “ bent, in a full synagogue : can this temerity
 “ be pardoned ? Are there not six days in the
 “ week, in which he might have cured them ?
 “ and must one, in contempt of the sabbath,
 “ restore health, or even demand it ?

I know not what demonstration could be more conspicuous than these public reproaches, which indeed are very trifling and unjust, but suppose the miracles to be real, and so evident, that envy cannot offuscate them, and which the mind could never suggest, unless it were prompted by an impotent malice.

† “ This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath.” John ix. 16.

|| “ They asked him, whether it was lawful to heal on the sabbath-day, that they might accuse him.” Matth. ix. 10.

† “ The ruler of the synagogue being moved with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work : in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day.” Luke xiii. 14.

A R T I C L E III.

Third proof. Jealousy of the inhabitants of Nazareth.

“ W H Y, said the inhabitants of Nazareth to Christ, do * ye not perform in your own country, the miracles which you wrought elsewhere? we have heard so much of the wonders which you have done at Capernaum, why do you prefer strangers to us?” This complaint, tho’ unjust, and arising from pride and envy, is an attestation of the miracles wrought at Capernaum. They would have disowned them, instead of asking the like, if they had not been certain and notorious. And, indeed, when Christ related the examples of Naaman the Syrian, and of the widow of Sarepta the Phenician, to shew that he was at liberty to perform his miracles where he pleased, and to prefer strangers to his fellow-citizens, they did not accuse him of impotency, but were so irritated at the preference, which mortified their pride, that they were desirous to cast him out headlong; and by this jealousy, which terminated in indignation, they manifested the preference to have been a fact, and consequently, the miracles wrought in other cities: for false reports, and fictitious miracles,

* “ Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.” Luke iv. 23.

PART. miracles, acknowledged as such, could only
 IV. excite contempt, and not a furious jealousy.

ARTICLE IV.

Fourth proof. The reproaches, which Christ makes to the towns, where he had performed many miracles, invincibly establish their certainty and evidence.

THE impenitence of the cities, * where Christ wrought so many prodigies, more strongly enforces their truth, not as impenitence, but as being publicly reproached. For it is highly improbable, that Christ should accuse the inhabitants of Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, and other towns, of being more obdurate and impenitent than the Tyrians and Sidonians, and more culpable than the inhabitants of Sodom, for having beheld, without conversion, so many prodigies and miracles, which

* "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Wo unto thee Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." Matth. viii. 20, &c.

which infidels, and the most profligate men, CHAP.
would have been so moved with, that they IV.
would have done public penance, and covered
themselves with sackcloth and ashes. These
comparisons, so grating to natural pride, and
so opposite to the opinion the Jews had of
their justice, would doubtless have induced
them absolutely to disown these prodigies, if
they had been doubtful, or to depreciate them,
if they had not been manifest: and Jesus must
have exposed himself to public censure, in-
stead of rendering himself formidable by his
anathemas, if there had not been a complete
evidence on his side.

A R T I C L E V.

*Fifth proof. The ancient tradition of
the Jews, who allow the miracles of
Jesus Christ, but attribute them to
the pronouncing the name of God, or
to magic.*

IN fine, the Jews cotemporary with
Christ, were so convinced that he had
wrought miracles, that tradition has delivered
them down to their posterity, and they may
be traced in their ancient monuments, where
they are attributed to the secret which Christ
had found of pronouncing properly the name
of JEHOVAH; or to magic, which his mother
learnt in Egypt.

These

PART These suppositions, one of which is absurd
 IV. and the other impious, are cogent proofs, and
 { testimonies so much the more convincing, as
 envy and malice are forced to submit to the
 evidence. We need not the Jews to inform
 us by what power Christ operated these pro-
 digies; we are content that they acknow-
 ledge their being wrought. 'Tis a conjecture
 futable to the grossness of their understandings,
 to ascribe them to the literal pronounciation of
 a word; and 'tis a calumny agreeable to their
 impiety, to attribute them to Satan or magic.
 By this black accusation they manifested them-
 selves true children of their fathers, who main-
 tained, that Christ cured the possessed, be-
 cause himself * was possessed; and that he cast
 out the inferior devils by the power he received
 from Beelzebub their chief. This calumny
 Christ refutes by invincible reasoning †, from
 whence there results, at least, a public renoun-
 cing of Satan, a solemn execration of his pre-
 tended power, and so terrible a qualifica-
 tion of the crime, which ascribes the works
 of the Holy Ghost to that lying spirit, that
 it is esteemed for ever irremissible, and can-
 not obtain pardon either in this world or in
 the next. Do magicians thus declare their
 horror for him whose ministers they are? do
 they thus renounce him from whom they de-
 rive their power? and if it be true, that the
 inferior devils submit to their chief, is that the
 way

* He hath Beelzebub, Mark iii. 22.

† See Huetius's *demonstratio evangelica*, p. 421, 422. Bos-
 fuet bishop of Meaux's reflections on the universal history, and
 Bextorf on the name יריה.

way to subject the weakest by despising him CHAP.
who is their superior? One is ashamed to an- III.
swer seriously such false aspersions, the igno-
miny of which reflects upon those who oppose
the truth, and treat as fabulous upon other oc-
casions every thing which is said of magic.

A R T I C L E VI.

*Confutation of the Jewish calumny with
respect to magic.*

LET the Jews, and those who authorise
their unjust suspicions, listen to what a
legion of devils prostrate at Christ's feet de-
clared; and let them learn of those affrighted
spirits who is it that held them in subjection,
and what power he had of casting them out
into the deep. They say, * "Jesus thou Son of
" God, what have we to do with thee?"
(Let calumny hearken to this, and seek for a
darker place than hell to hide itself) "are you
" come to torment us before the time? we
" beseech you not to command us to go out
" into the deep." Let them listen also to
what one of these spirits declare, being con-
strained to leave the possessed, even before
Christ had laid his external command.
† "What have we to do with thee, thou
" Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy
" us? I know thee who thou art, the holy
" One of God." This confession extorted
from

* Matth. viii. 29. † Luke viii. 31. Mark i. 23.


PART from the mouth of falshood is most magni-
 IV. cent and august; for it is actually acknow-
 ledgeing Christ to be the holy One of God; and nevertheless Christ answers only by putting him to silence, who confessed and adored him in this manner. † "Hold thy peace, he saith, rebuking him, and come out of the man."

Thus he silenced many devils, who when they came out of the possessed, cried, * "Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them, suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ." Such a prohibition appeared opposite to the progress of the gospel, which received an unquestionable testimony on the side of the devils, since they were compelled to give it at the very time Christ treated them as impure spirits, and by his command they were constrained to relinquish the possessed. But from this testimony the devils might afterwards have derived honour, for having favoured the truth; now they were unworthy of this honour; every thing which came from them was odious; and Christ was so imbittered against these impious spirits, that he looked upon his name to be prophaned in their mouth, even at the time they paid him adoration.

If it be affirmed, that these facts were advanced by the evangelists with a design to raise the reputation of Christ, it rather enforces than extenuates my reasoning; for the evangelists could invent them only in consequence of their

† Ver. 25.

* Luke iv. 41.

their hatred to the devil, and of every thing CHAP.
which issues from him; and such an hatred, IV.
which doubtless was instilled into them by 
Christ, is incompatible with the suspicion of
any commerce with that spirit of darkness,
either for their master or themselves.

We have seen, when the apostles and their
miracles were examined, how much their doc-
trine was opposite to all impious curiosity, and to
all the methods suggested by the devil of know-
ing future events. How much they endea-
voured to subvert his dominion, and eradicate
all superstition and idolatrous pageantry; how
much they detested his approbation and praise
by putting him to silence, as Christ had done;
how very solicitous they were to demand
of all those, who were baptized, to renounce
Satan and his works; and how they inspired
their disciples with estrangement and hatred, not
only in respect to magic, but to every thing
which could affect the simplicity of the worship
due to God alone. A person must be void of all
understanding, not to discover from what source
such sentiments and conduct proceed, and not
to give glory to Christ for the sanctity of his
apostles, and their exact severity in all these
points.

But as I have already observed, 'tis doing
too much honour to so gross a calumny, to
offer a serious confutation. Christ risen from
the dead, sitting at the right-hand of his Fa-
ther, sending his Spirit down on his disciples,
destroying every where the idols and their al-
tars, exiling the devil to his ancient darkness,

PART is infinitely superior to so trivial an accusation.

IV. It may suffice to ask, * Whether the devil could give sight to a man born blind, or restore to life a man that had been four days dead? Falshood may cast a mist before the eyes, and beguile; but a real, constant, and permanent resurrection, is the work only of the Creator, and the living and true God.

C H A P. V.

Testimony given by Saint John the Baptist of Christ: authority of such a testimony considered, with relation to all the circumstances which accompany it. John the Baptist is certainly the fore-runner foretold by the prophets, and consequently Jesus Christ, whose fore-runner he was, is the Messiah. Authority of the testimony of John the Baptist by the union and concurrence of many circumstances, which demonstrate the truth of it. Prediction made to Zacharias, who was speechless. Fecundity of the aged and barren Elizabeth. Speech restored to Zacharias: evident prediction of the future ministry of his son. John being concealed in the desert until the hour of his manifestation, and proclaiming, when he appeared, that the Messiah was come, tho' he did not distinctly know him, is certainly inspired with

* "Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" said certain Jews, who refuted the accusation which others alledged against Christ, of his being possessed, John x. 21.

with a divine light. The personal character CHAP.
of Saint John, and the idea which he had of V.
the Messiah, and of true justice, prove his
mission to be divine. The constant refusal of
Saint John to pass for the Messiah, is a con-
vincing proof of his sincerity. His senti-
ments with relation to Christ, whose glory
he was desirous to augment at the expence of
his own, add a farther dignity to his testi-
mony. The martyrdom of Saint John seals
his testimony. Important reflections upon the
character of his resolution and prudence in
parting with his disciples, and bringing them
over to Christ. Invincible strength of these
united proofs: they might suffice, abstracted
from all others.

CHRIST relies only upon himself, to
prove what he is: his divinity is above
every thing, and his miracles are the sole testi-
mony worthy of him. * “Ye sent deputies to
“ John (he says to the Jews) and he bare
“ witness unto the truth. But I receive not
“ testimony from man, but these things I
“ say” †, (that is, I put you in mind of what
John said of me) “that ye might be saved.
“ He was a burning and a shining light; and
“ ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his
“ light. But I have greater witness than that
“ of John; for the works which the Father
“ hath given me to finish, the same works
“ that I do, bear witness of me, that the Fa-
“ ther hath sent me.”

VOL. III.

H

We

* John x. 21.

† John v. 33.

PART We have hitherto considered the preference
 IV. which Christ shews to his own miracles,
 and to those which he wrought by his apostles, above the testimony of John the Baptist; but it is just, that after having considered Christ, we return to his fore-runner, and make a better use of that burning and shining light than the Jews did, who admired his light in the beginning, but did not embrace the Messiah whom it discovered.

ARTICLE I.

John the Baptist is certainly the fore-runner foretold by the prophets, and consequently Christ, whose fore-runner he was, is the Messiah.

IT must be particularly remembered, that God foretold by his prophets, that when the times were accomplished, the Messiah should be preceded by an † angel; that is to say, by an ambassador or fore-runner of eminent virtue, who should prepare the way and dispose the people to receive him. “ Behold, saith he by the prophet Malachy, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in.”

This

† Malach. iii. 1.

This temple is certainly that which the LI-CHAP.
raelites rebuilt after they were delivered from V.
the Babylonish captivity, as appears by the pro-
phet Haggai ||, who was cotemporary with
Malachy, and who comforted the Jews in the
meanness and simplicity of the temple, which
was much inferior in magnificence to Solo-
mon's, by assuring them, that the Messiah
would come in person and proclaim peace in
it; an honour which would render this temple,
tho' void of ornament, much more glorious
than the first, notwithstanding it was most
sumptuously decorated. "Thus saith the Lord
"of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I
"will shake the heavens, and the earth: I
"will shake all nations, and the desire of all
"nations shall come, and I will fill this house
"with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The
"silver is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The
"glory of this latter house shall be greater than
"the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in
"this place will I give peace, saith the Lord
"of hosts."

This temple has been destroyed for many
ages. It follows then, either that the pro-
phesy is false, if the Messiah is not come,
or that the Messiah is come, if the prophecy
be true. The proof could not be more evi-
dent with regard to Christ, nor more pressing
against the Jews and those who refused to
believe in him. This proof we have given in
another place in its full extent and force, and I
cursorily repeat it here, because it is as conclusive

H 2

with

PART with respect to the fore-runner of the Messiah;

IV. as to the Messiah himself, since he must precede him before the second temple can be destroyed; and because Jesus is equally distinguishable by what the prophets say of him, as by what they say of the messenger who should prepare the way: for it is equally certain, that Christ must have come before the destruction of the temple, and after his fore-runner: and as there was no one who assumed the quality of a fore-runner of the Messiah, before the destruction of the temple, except Saint John the Baptist; and as Saint John the Baptist stiled himself the fore-runner of Christ only, it follows evidently, that Christ is the Messiah.

A R T I C L E II.

Authority of the testimony of John the Baptist, by the union and concurrence of many circumstances, which demonstrate the truth thereof. Prediction made by Zacharias, who was struck speechless.

THIS proof is of great weight, if we consider it only as it has been above proposed; but it is much stronger, when we inspect it in its utmost extent, and join all the circumstances which the divine wisdom thought proper to unite with it, in order to render the testimony of the fore-runner worthy the Messiah,

fiah, and to gain him an authority capable of
convincing all understandings, and removing
all doubts.

CHAP.
V.

In examining these circumstances, I do not presume to offer any thing new; yet I desire that they be looked upon for a while as new, and by transferring ourselves to the times in which the things happened, the same reflections be made, as would arise to a serious man, who was determined to investigate the truth.

We know that when the temple subsisted, the priests and Levites being divided into sundry families, officiated by turn, and that the different functions were distributed to them by lot, to avoid jealousy and preference. One of these functions, and even the most important, was that of offering up incense upon the golden altar in the interior temple, where the priests alone entered, and where the priest charged with this august function had no one else to accompany him. Zacharias, who was of the lineage of Aaron by Abia, chief of one of the twenty-four sacerdotal families, executed the priest's office in the order of his course, and as he was officiating an angel appeared to him, who seeing him full of fear, said unto him, † "Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer
" is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear
" thee a son, and thou shalt call his name
" John. For he shall be great in the sight of
" the Lord; and he shall be filled with the
" Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.
" And many of the children of Israel shall he

H 3

" turn

† Luke i. 13.

PART “ turn to the Lord their God. And he shall

IV. “ go before him in the spirit and power of
 “ Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the
 “ children, and the disobedient to the wisdom
 “ of the just, to make ready a people prepared
 “ for the Lord.” These words of the angel are
 the same with those of the prophet Malachy *,
 excepting that the prophet seemed to understand
 them of the very person of Elias, whereas the
 angel applied them to the fore-runner, who
 was endued with his efficacy and spirit.

Zacharias answered the angel, “ Whereby
 “ shall I know this? for I am an old man,
 “ and my wife well stricken in years †. And
 “ the angel said unto him, I am Gabriel, that
 “ stand in the presence of God; and am sent
 “ to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these
 “ glad tidings. And behold thou shalt be
 “ dumb, and not able to speak, until the day
 “ that these things shall be performed, be-
 “ cause thou believest not my words which
 “ shall be fulfilled in their season. And the
 “ people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled
 “ that he tarried so long in the temple. And
 “ when he came out, he could not speak un-
 “ to them: and they perceived that he had
 “ seen a vision in the temple: for he beckned
 “ unto them, and remained speechless.”

* Malach. iv. to the end.

† Beside this, she was naturally barren. Ver. 7.

A R T I C L E III.

Fecundity of Elizabeth, who was old and barren. Speech restored to Zacharias. Evident prediction of the future ministry of his son.

I Am willing we should suspend our judgment in respect to what passed in the temple. But behold, Zacharias is dumb, and he became so at the time he was offering a sacrifice to God. The signs which he made to shew that he had seen an heavenly vision, will be explained by the event. At present I am content with a single fact, attested by the whole people.

Elizabeth growing pregnant in her old age, conceals her condition about five months, whilst she admired the grace of God bestowed on her, in taking away the reproach of her sterility; and when she brought forth a son, her neighbours came to rejoice with her, because the Lord had shewn great compassion on her. On the eighth day, which was that of circumcision, † “ they called him Zacharias, “ after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so, but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, “ There is none of thy kindred that is called “ by this name. And they made signs to his “ father, how he would have him called. “ And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote,

H 4

“ say-

† Ver. 24, 25, 57.

PART “ saying, His name is John. And they mar-
 IV. “ velled all. And his mouth was opened im-
 “ mediately, and his tongue loosed, and he
 “ spake and praised God. And he was filled
 “ with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, say-
 “ ing, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for
 “ he hath visited and redeemed his people.
 “ The same of these wonders were noised
 “ throughout all the hill-country of Judea.
 “ And all they || that heard them, laid them
 “ up in their hearts, saying, What manner of
 “ child shall this be? for the hand of the Lord
 “ is visible in the prodigies which accompanied
 “ his birth.

Was not the admiration of these people well grounded? and were not the prodigies which astonished them, manifest? does not Zacharias, who was dumb for the space of nine months, and on a sudden received the faculty of his speech, merit to be believed upon what happened to him in the temple? does not the birth of a son in his old age, when Elizabeth, as well as Sarah, on account of sterility and age, was no longer capable to conceive, justify the angel's promise? could Zacharias have any view in publishing his own incredulity? and was it not in his power to attribute his silence to some other cause? what could be more extraordinary and miraculous to render men attentive to the birth of the forerunner of the Messiah? and if prodigies of so striking and public a nature are not sufficient to

|| “ All they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, say-
 “ ing, What manner of child shall this be? for the hand of the
 “ Lord was with him. Ver, 66.

to render him respectable to all Israel, I know CHAP.

not what incredulity can require more. But V.

let us hearken to Zacharias; and in his song

which is certainly very mysterious and pro-

found, let us only consider what he says of his

son, when he addresses himself thus: “* And

“ thou child shalt be called the prophet of the

“ Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of

“ the Lord to prepare his ways; To give

“ knowledge of salvation unto his people, by

“ the remission of their sins, Through the

“ tender mercies of our God; whereby the

“ Day-spring from on high hath † visited us,

“ to give light to them that sit in darkness,

“ and in the shadow of death, and to guide

“ our feet into the way of peace.”

Upon what grounds could Zacharias attribute to his son the quality of fore-runner of the Messiah, and very plainly proclaim his approaching nativity? what knowledge could he have of things so secret and unknown, if they had not been revealed to him in the temple? they who deny this revelation, cannot say, that he had learnt from Mary the incarnation of the Word, or that he had been apprized by Elizabeth of the supernatural leaping of John in her womb. Those I am now disputing with, are not so happy as to believe these mysteries in a firm and resolute manner: for if they were convinced of them, they would likewise be persuaded of the truth of

Zacha-

* Luke i. 76.

† *Ἐν οἷς ἐπεσκέψατο ἡμᾶς ἀνατολὴ ἡ ἡμέρας.*
Luke i. 78.

** 'Tis Christ, and not Saint John, that is called the Day-spring: the prophets thus stile the Messiah.” Luke i. 79.

PART Zacharias's heavenly vision. Upon what then
 IV. could two such predictions be grounded, that
 were so astonishing and improbable, and were
 nevertheless advanced so positively, and in so
 plain and precise terms? did not the event
 justify them? and could this event have been
 foreseen by human conjectures? therefore the
 apparition of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias,
 must necessarily be acknowledged, and then
 the whole is granted. Christ is the most High,
 whose prophet is John the Baptist: he is the
 Day-spring, whose Aurora is John: he is the
 Saviour who remits the sins of mankind, and
 John prepares the way for him by repentance.

A R T I C L E IV.

John being concealed in the desert until the hour of his manifestation, and proclaiming when he appeared, that the Messiah was come, tho' he had no distinct knowledge of him, was certainly inspired with a divine light.

AFTER so wonderful an event, which rendered the whole world attentive to the extraordinary graces God had bestowed on the first years of a child* destined to a sacred function, John disappears, and God conceals him

* "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel." Luke i. 80.

him in the desert till the time he resolved to
shew him to all Israel.

CHAP.
V.

This fact cannot be contested. We know nothing of John from his birth, till he comes preaching repentance upon the banks of Jordan, being then about thirty years of age; and the astonishment which the world was in on account of his manner of life, of his zeal, and of his discourse, proves that he was unknown till that time.

God, by separating him thus from human converse, intended to exempt him from the slightest faults, which in this converse are inevitable even to the justest of men; to prepare him, by a great sanctity, to be the fore-runner of the Holy of Holies; and to gain him a great respect and authority by so long a retreat, when he should come out publishing, "that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and that the Messiah was come."

But besides these motives, God designed to prevent all our doubts, and to divest us of every pretext for our distrusts, by taking away the prophet of the Messiah in his most tender infancy; and † concealing him in the desert till he should command him to prepare the way before him, and proclaim to Israel, that he was come, altho' he was yet unknown. For there could not be the least room for suspicion, to behold a man coming out of a desert, whose nativity had been attended with so many miracles,

† "John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

PART.cles, and of whom they knew nothing till
 IV. that time; to see him, I say, coming out of
 a desert, and declaring at his first appearance,
 that the promises were accomplished; that the
 kingdom of heaven was at hand; that the De-
 liverer, so long expected, was coming to mani-
 fest himself; and that he must hasten to make
 the ways plain, by removing all obstacles to
 his coming by repentance.

Let us examine this extraordinary man, and
 hear what he says. From whence has he his
 information? of whom has he taken counsel?
 what authority has he for what he asserts? who
 would have expected such news a moment
 before his manifestation? can it be doubtful
 whether it was the Spirit of God which sent
 and instructed him?

But let us ask him, where is the Messiah?
 I know, says he, that he is certainly come,
 and * that he is in the midst of his people.
 But I know him not, I never beheld him: I
 could not distinguish him from amongst the
 rest without a sign given me by God, and I
 have not as yet remarked him who agrees
 with that sign; when he shall exhibit him
 to me with this distinction, I will declare
 him to the world: but till that time I can-
 not.

Could

* "There standeth one among you whom ye know not.—I knew
 him not but that he should be made manifest to Israel, there-
 fore am I come baptizing with water. I knew him not:
 but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto
 me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and
 remaining on him, the same is he, &c." John i. 26,—33.

Could a prudent man hear this with indifference, if he had been present? could he despise news of such importance, affirmed by a man so visibly inspired? could he suspect this prophet without giving up his reason? a prophet who actually came out of the desert, and had been invisible till that moment to all Israel? could he suspect him, I say, of having concerted every thing he says with some pretended Messiah, with whose visage and name he affects to be unacquainted? would not incredulity, in that case, be folly and weakness? and would a sensible man be willing to risk his salvation upon so irrational a supposition? and yet we must either fall into this excess, or acknowledge John Baptist to be a prophet, and Christ the Messiah and promised Saviour; which contains and decides the whole.

CHAP.
V.

A R T I C L E V.

The personal character of Saint John, and the idea which he entertained of the Messiah and of true justice, prove his mission to be divine.

LET us, however, patiently bear with the timidity and irresolution of a man, who would not refuse to believe, but would only take all possible precaution not to be deceived; and let us examine with him, the prophet who proclaims the coming of the Messiah.

If

PART If he is an impostor, he has doubtless the same
 IV. ideas in common with the Jews. He would have
 him reign, and win the minds of the people, he would represent him as a man zealous for the glory of his nation, and its liberty, and afterwards partake with him the credit, authority, and other advantages attending the supreme command.

But here 'tis the reverse: for this prophet not only carries the love of poverty and austerity even to an excess, but speaks of the Messiah only as a severe judge of consciences, an enemy to false virtue, or pretended justice, and entirely opposite to the prejudiced notions of the Jews; yet entirely agreeable to the true idea which the ancient prophets had of him: “ *O generation of vipers, he said to the pharisees and to all people who came to his baptism, “ who hath warned you to flee from “ the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore “ fruits meet for repentance.—And think not “ to say within yourselves, We have Abraham “ to our father: for I say unto you, that God is “ able of these stones to raise up children unto “ Abraham. And now also the ax is laid un- “ to the root of the trees: therefore every “ tree, which bringeth not forth good fruit, “ is hewn down and cast into the fire. I in- “ deed baptize you with water unto repent- “ ance; but he that cometh after me is “ mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes “ I am not worthy to unloose. He shall bap- “ tize you with the Holy Ghost, and with “ fire.

* Matt iii. 7. Luke iii. 7,—16.

“ fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will
“ thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his
“ wheat into the garner : but he will burn up
“ the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

CHAP. V.

Can we perceive in a doctrine so pure, so spiritual, so disinterested, and in fine so contrary to the designs of an artful and popular man ; can we, I say, perceive the false prophet of a false Christ ? on the contrary, do not we discern in it, the same Spirit who had foretold the fore-runner of the true Messiah by the prophet Malachy, and both their characters ? “ * I will send my messenger, (he saith in the name of the Lord of Hosts) “ he shall “ prepare the way before me, and the Lord “ whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his “ temple : even the messenger of the covenant, “ behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. “ But who may abide the day of his coming ? “ And who shall stand when he appeareth ? “ for he is like a refiner’s fire : and he shall “ fit as a refiner, and purifier of silver. He “ shall purify the sons of Levi as gold and “ silver, &c.” that is to say, those on whom the priesthood is conferred, and the ministry of the temple, who seem the most upright in all Israel. “ † Behold, says he again, I will “ send you Elijah the prophet, before the “ coming of the great and terrible day of the “ Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the “ children to their fathers, lest I come and “ smite the earth with a curse.”

* Mal. iii. 1, &c. † Ibid. iv. 5.

ARTICLE VI.

The constant refusal of Saint John to pass for the Messiah, is an incontestable proof of his sincerity.

Hitherto every thing agrees in a surprizing manner; yet what is subsequent appears still more convincing and cogent, and I beg the reader to examine, whether or no I reason right. John * the Baptist, without working miracles, appeared so great in the eyes of the people, that they were inclined to acknowledge him for the Messiah; and the pharisees themselves sent deputies to him, to ask him whether it was he. These deputies were chosen amongst the priests and levites, and might have greatly prevailed with the public, if John had been willing to avail himself of them, by giving an answer agreeable to their conception, or at least by replying mysteriously. But let us see, whether humility and sincerity can give a clearer answer. “† Who are you?” they say unto him: I am not the Christ, he confessed; and upon this account my confession is clear and precise, I declare, I am not he. What then? they replied; art thou Elias? and he says, I am not. Art thou a prophet? and he answered, No.” He was Elias in spirit and Zeal. He was more than a prophet.

* “ And all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not.” Luke iii. 15.

† John i. 19, &c.

prophet. He could have answered with truth, CHAP. I am Elias, and I am a prophet. But he could V. have also answered in another very true sense, that he was not Elias, and that he was not come to foretell future events, and the future mysteries of the Messiah, like the prophets; and he chose this last as most conformable to his humility. The deputies said, “† Who art thou, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? what sayest thou of thyself?” He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. Now they that were sent, were of the pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not. He it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

Is it possible after such answers, so simple, so precise, so humble, attended with such circumstances, and which, without injuring the truth, he could so easily and advantageously have applied to himself; is it possible, I say, that after such proofs of sincerity, we should suspect him of craft and insincerity, he who is so clearly an enemy to such practices?

But I consent for a while to admit him capable thereof, in order to confound incredulity.

† John i. 22, &c.

PART IV. Why then did not this subtle man accept of the title of Messiah, which they offered him without his seeking? why did he not avail himself of the general disposition of the people, and the priests and pharisees in his favour? why did he reserve for another, who had no right to it, and whose ambition and imposition he knew, a glory to which he had at least an equal claim? why did not he prevent him while he was yet concealed in the croud of people and unknown? what could he fear from a rival who was in obscurity, and all whose designs he could have frustrated by an answer to a question proposed to him?

He knew better than any body, that this pretended Messiah had neither mission nor character. He knew that he had concerted with him this whole prelude, and that he only executed the plot, and followed the plan they had agreed upon to deceive the world. He could not therefore have any sincere esteem for an impostor, whom he could so easily supplant, nor look upon himself as more culpable for substituting himself in his place, than by preparing the way for him. Why then does he continue to mention him with so much respect, and to speak of himself with so much modesty, when the preference was given to him, and the people were ignorant, whether it was a preference that could be justly contended? what view can he have from such ridiculous humility? what fortune can he expect from an obscure person, who perhaps may never be as successful as himself, and who could never
raise

raise him as high as he could raise himself, if CHAP.
he had a mind? why does John the Baptist V.
act the hypocrite only to favour another's
interest, when he himself could so easily and
readily reap the advantage of his own hypo-
crisy? I maintain, that all this amounts to one
of the strongest demonstrations, and I am
convinced, that we must use as great a vio-
lence to our reason to resist it, as to refuse our
assent to any mathematical demonstration.

A R T I C L E VII.

*The sentiments of Saint John with rela-
tion to Christ, whose glory he was
desirous to increase at the expence of
his own.*

BUT let us strictly examine this proof,
and see with what sincerity and disinter-
estedness this admirable man approves of the
reputation and glory which Christ daily ac-
quired by his miracles, whilst the high idea
the people had conceived of himself daily di-
minished. His disciples were concerned at it,
and being stung with jealousy, one day represen-
ted to him, that Christ whom he had mention-
ed with that reverence “* baptized, and all men
“ came to him. He answered and said, A man
“ can receive nothing, except it be given him
“ from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me wit-

I 2

“ ne

* John iii. 26, &c,

PART “ nefs, that I said I am not the Chrif, but
 IV. “ that I am fent before him. He that hath
 “ the bride, is the bridegroom: but the friend-
 “ of the bridegroom, which standeth and
 “ heareth him, rejoiceth greatly becaufe of
 “ the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy is there-
 “ fore fulfilled. He muft increafe, but I muft
 “ decreafe. He that cometh from above, is
 “ above all: he that is of the earth, is earth-
 “ ly, and fpeaketh of the earth: he that
 “ cometh from heaven, is above all.

Nothing can be more fublime or perfect than fuch a reply, which contains the moft fecret, and at the fame time the moft effential truths of Chriftianity, and fupposes in John the Baptift a fupernatural light and wifdom. You feem concerned, fays he to his difciples, that I am not in fo great efteem, and that my reputation fades, and is eclipsed by another’s glory. But what I have, I have received: I cannot give myfelf any thing, and all I have comes from heaven. To be difpleafed with another perfon’s being held in greater efteem than myfelf, is repining at the difpenfation of providence. Since I told you that I was not the Chrif, you fhould have underftood that I was only a minifter, and not the bridegroom. The church is not mine; I am as one of its children in its bofom. But it is not I who render it fruitful: there is none but the Meffiah, who is at the fame time both its father and bridegroom; and this bridegroom has been long expected. The fervants have preceded him, but they could neither fupply his place, nor comfort us in
 his

his absence. To day I hear his voice, very CHAP. V.
different from that of Moses and the prophets.

I hear him with reverence and joy. I hearken to him standing; I should be very much displeased, that whilst he is speaking, any one should come to hear me. I have prepared the way for him, and I have only to disappear after his coming. I am interested in his glory, and the same reasons which induced me to proclaim him, before he shewed himself, oblige me to retire after his appearance. It would be keeping men in subjection and misery, and continuing therein myself, to attempt to engage them to me. I cannot change them nor render them happy: I am, as they are, formed of the earth, and my impotent and ineffectual words cannot restore their celestial origin which they have forfeited. It only belongs to him, who is the creator and above all, to be the object of our faith and hope. God only can save and reform men.

All this is comprized in the words of St. John, which I have only a little paraphrased, in order to convey the sense in a more obvious manner to those, who, perhaps, may have but an imperfect idea of it; and I ask, of whosoever will give himself the trouble to read this, whether it be possible to arraign a man of such virtue and sincerity, of having concerted, or in a manner designed the character he so worthily maintained, tho', in other respects, every circumstance did not prove the contrary.

ARTICLE VIII.

The martyrdom of St. John confirms his testimony. Important reflections upon the character of his resolution and his prudence in parting with his disciples, and bringing them over to Christ.

BUT this is not all. The testimony of St. John must be defective in an essential point if he had not confirmed it with his blood, and if he had any other recompence in this life for his zeal and love for justice and truth, than the glory of dying for it. We know that whilst he was in Galilee* under Herod's jurisdiction, he found fault with Herod because he had espoused Herodias his brother Philip's wife; and that prince being offended at this liberty threw him into prison †, nay even put him in irons, yet without daring to deprive him of life, tho' Herodias had formed the design, and used the utmost artifice to have him executed: "for Herod ‡ feared John, knowing
" that he was a just man, and an holy, and
" observed him, and when he heard him, he
" did many things, and heard him gladly."

We

* Mark vi. 17.

† Laid hold upon John and bound him in prison. But Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, but she could not.

‡ Mark vi. 20.

We likewise know how this weak, superstitious, and cruel prince complied with the passion of Herodias, through the fear of perjury; and how he sacrificed his understanding and conscience to unjust and frivolous motives.

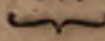
CHAP.
V.

What I am now considering, confines me to those points which are essential to my design. First, it is not for himself, nor for any personal accusation, that John was shut up in prison, and afterwards beheaded. He could have preserved his liberty and life, and even continued his ministry, if he had not represented to the prince that he was doing what by the law of God was forbidden. He was therefore very far from having any motive of ambition or interest, and very opposite to the character of a flatterer, which is inseparable from impostors.

Secondly, he does not seek to gain the reputation of an intrepid man, or of one capable of making even princes tremble by haughtily reproving them, and by mortifying their pride and ambition with an imperious and severe command. It suffices him to say, *What you do is unlawful*, and afterwards he held his tongue; and when his wise counsels flung him into prison and chains, he was not less disposed to advise the prince, who deprived him of liberty, whenever he was pleased to consult with him, and to administer his counsels, with so much sweetness, patience and tranquillity, that the prince was edified and touched with it, and took pleasure not only in hearing, but even in following

PART lowing them. Is not the truth and sincerity

IV. of this character very obvious? do we not

 easily conceive, how opposite it is to that of a man actuated by any other motives than those of conscience? and can we possibly judge, that a man so elevated above all passions, so disinterested, so zealous for truth and justice, and at the same time so humble, moderate, and wise, so equal, in fine, in all conditions, could be governed by such base and effeminate passions, as dissimulation, hypocrisy, and a design of deceiving his country in so capital a point as that of a false Messiah.

Thirdly, 'tis in his prison*, and a little before his death, that he sends two of his disciples to Christ, to attest his miracles, under pretext of asking him, whether it was he that was to come, or another was to be expected. For he knew that his disciples were extremely attached to him, and that the more he essayed to lessen their affections, the more his modesty and humility prejudiced them in his favour. He thought †, that the superior candour and humility of Christ, joined to actual, or very recent miracles, would have a greater influence upon them, than any discourses; and he was satisfied, that they had rather engage in a deputation, where there was the appearance of any doubt, than in another where they should be obliged to acknowledge, in his name, Jesus Christ for the Messiah. Such a conduct, so full of wisdom and charity, is an in-

* "When he heard in prison the works of Christ. Matt. xi. 2.

† Luke vii. 21.

incontestable proof of the desire he had, that his disciples should be invariably attached to Christ, as to him who had been promised, and for a long time since expected. But what interest could he ever after have in the reputation of Christ, if it had been grounded only on falshood? why, as he is ready to die, does he not rather undeceive his disciples? what inhumanity should impel him to sacrifice their simplicity and docility to the imposture? what advantage could arise to him in his chains from their seduction? and what did it signify to him that they should be always attached to him, since by changing a master they would only change the error, or rather add a second to the first; by believing a false Christ upon the word of a false prophet?

A R T I C L E IX.

Invincible force of these united proofs: they would suffice, were they even to be abstracted from all others.

I Confess ingenuously, that these proofs have so great an influence upon me, that had I only the testimony of Saint John, attended with all the circumstances which we have observed, it would be impossible for me not to acknowledge Christ for the Messiah, and for the fore-runner, whom Isaiah and Malachy had promised*. Let us now join the circumstances,

* If. xl. Mal. iii.

PART stances, and see if we can resist the impression

IV. they must make upon a mind which loves and
 investigates the truth.

Zacharias, † respectable for the priesthood and his exemplary virtue, enters the temple to offer incense to God upon the interior altar: whilst they were sacrificing on that of the holocausts the victim of the evening; and he went out speechless, making signs to the people, who were present and amazed, that this casualty was the effect of an heavenly vision. He has a son from a very aged and barren wife, being much advanced himself in years. When they disputed about naming the child, the mother, by a secret impulse, and the father afterwards by a revelation, which he had received, called him John, contrary to the inclination and prejudices of their whole family. At this very moment Zacharias recovered his speech, and prophesied. He says clearly, that the Light which should enlighten Israel, and all those which are in the shadow of death, is near at hand; that his son, who is just born, is the fore-runner; and that he is sent to prepare the way before him, and to make strait his paths.

His son, who from his infancy was remarkable for grace and sanctity, was sequestered from human sight in his earliest years, and driven by the Spirit of God into the desert. At thirty years of age he quits his solitude in order to publish the coming of our Saviour, who is
 actually

† “ Walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. Luke i. 6.

actually concealed in the croud of people, and to prepare the way for him by a baptism of repentance. He declares that he has not as yet a competent knowledge of him, but that it had been revealed to him it should be he on whom he saw the Holy Spirit descend. CHAP.
V.

Before the Messiah manifests himself, John the Baptist passes for him in the minds of the people. The priests and pharisees send deputies to acknowledge him in this quality, if he would please to accept of it. And he not only refuses it, but declares himself unworthy to unloose the latchet of the shoes of the Messiah, tho' he was then unknown. He says to his disciples, too zealous for his glory, that he is born of the earth, that his words are as weak as his origin is mean; that the Messiah comes from heaven, that he is above all, and is alone the bridegroom; and that, very far from being his competitor or rival, he thinks himself happy to decrease in glory that his may increase, and to disappear, that he may be the sole object of mankind.

He might have lived in peace in Galilee, esteemed and respected even by Herod, if he would have taken no notice of the crime of that prince. He reproves him with liberty, and he is imprisoned for it: but even in the prison he attracts the confidence of the prince who detains him there, and with regret sacrifices him to Herodias's resentment.

Before his death, he makes use of the most efficacious, and at the same time the wisest means, to diminish the attachment his disciples had

PART had for his person, and to extinguish the sentiment of jealousy which they had entertained of Christ, and was an obstacle to their faith and salvation. And thus he crowns a life, equally innocent and austere, by martyrdom; as he crowns martyrdom by his charity and humility towards his disciples.

It is impossible to unite more circumstances together to give a divine stamp to the testimony of John the Baptist, without bestowing on him the gift of miracles, which would have served only to divide the minds of the people, and to strengthen the doubts of many, as well as the prejudice of his disciples. The finger of God is manifest here, and we cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom of his counsels, the extent of his power, and the variety of proofs, which he has given us with relation to Christ and religion; which, even taken separately, are all perfect in their kind: but their force is infinitely corroborated by their union, and the reciprocal assistance they afford each other.

C H A P. VI.

The birth of Christ revealed to shepherds by the angels. Certainty of this revelation demonstrated by seven important reflections.

THE miracles which preceded, and accompanied the nativity of Saint John †, must doubtless make most people attentive to the approaching advent of the Messiah, wherein he was so plainly stiled the prophet and fore-runner. But it is not easily conceived, that the prophecy of Elizabeth, to whom the Holy Spirit revealed the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, and who so highly commended Mary's faith, whom she acknowledged for the mother of her Lord, did not make more noise in the mountains of Judea. But the return of Mary to Nazareth, very probably slackened their attention and reflections; and it was only at Bethlehem where the mystery of the incarnation was clearly published to the shepherds by the angels, and where the wise men came from the East to pay adoration to the King of the Jews, that the Messiah's coming became notorious. But the hasty and secret retreat of the wise men,

† " Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she spake
" out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among wo-
" men, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is
" this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
" Blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance
" of those things, which were told her from the Lord. Luke
ii. 42.

PART men, and Mary's flight with her son into
IV. Egypt, must reflect an additional obscurity
upon a mystery of so great importance ; and
the silence of many years which passed betwixt
these first proofs of the Messiah's nativity and
the time of his manifestation, effaced the me-
mory of him, or at least hindered their mak-
ing any application to Christ, who to the most
part of the Jews appeared a new man, whom
these ancient events did not concern.

This is not as yet the place to examine, why
God had thus disposed these events, and why
it seems he had affected to shew, or to conceal
very near to that time the Messiah, causing a
sudden light to shine, which should discover
him ; and causing almost presently an obscu-
rity to succeed, which concealed him from
sight. Let us be content to adore the depth
of his counsels, which it will never be per-
mitted us to fathom ; tho' it be one of our
duties, to learn of himself his justice and li-
berty. And let us profit by the connection
which the evangelists have made between
things, separated by a space of thirty years,
which no longer concerns us, and is no longer
an obstacle, as it had been to the Jews, to our
perceiving the force of those proofs which de-
monstrate that Christ is the Messiah, whom the
angels proclaimed to the shepherds, and whom
the wise men, conducted by a miraculous star,
came to adore at Bethlehem.

I shall now make some reflections upon
these proofs, in order to establish their cer-
tainty ;

tainty; but on a supposition that I shall not
make my observations alone, and that a sin-
cere man, tho' as yet wavering in faith, would
be desirous to bear some share with me. I
commence with what the gospel says of
the shepherds, and I shall relate the whole
text, as the whole is necessary, without any
abridgment. * "There went out a decree
"from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world
"should be taxed. (And this taxing was first
"made, when Cyrenius was governor of Sy-
"ria.) And all went to be taxed, every one
"into his own city. And Joseph also went
"up from Galilee, out of the city of Naza-
"reth, into Judea, unto the city of David,
"which is called Bethlehem, (because he was
"of the house and lineage of David) to be
"taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being
"great with child. And so it was, that
"while they were there, the days were ac-
"complished that she should be delivered.
"And she brought forth her first-born son,
"and wrapped him in swadling clothes, and
"laid him in a manger, because there was no
"room for them in the inn. And there were
"in the same country shepherds abiding in
"the field, keeping watch over their flock
"by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord
"came upon them, and the glory of the Lord
"shone round about them; and they were
"fore afraid. And the angel said unto them,
"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tid-
"ings of great joy, which shall be to all peo-
"ple.

* Luke ii. 1.

PART
IV.

“ple. For unto you is born this day, in the
“city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ
“the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto
“you, Ye shall find the babe wrapped in
“swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And
“suddenly there was with the angel a mul-
“titude of the heavenly host, praising God,
“and saying, Glory to God in the highest,
“and on earth peace, good-will towards men.
“And it came to pass as the angels were gone
“away from them into heaven, the shep-
“herds said one to another, Let us now go
“even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing,
“which is now come to pass, which the
“Lord hath now made known unto us. And
“they came with haste, and found Mary and
“Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
“And when they had seen it, they made
“known abroad the saying, which was told
“them concerning this child. And all they
“that heard it, wondered at those things
“which were told them by the shepherds,
“and Mary pondered them in her heart.
“And the shepherds returned, glorifying and
“praising God, for all the things that they
“had heard and seen, as it was told unto
“them.”

ARTICLE

ARTICLE I.

First reflection.

THE first reflection that offers upon the preceding relation, is that there seems to me nothing probable in it; and that I should not expect any such thing, if I had only consulted my reason, or if I had only observed what is external and apparent in the scriptures. I never should have imagined that the Messiah must be born at Bethlehem only on the occasion of a journey; that the motive of the journey was the necessity of obeying the edict of a strange and infidel prince; that the king of the Jews, soon after his birth, was enrolled among Augustus's subjects; that even in Bethlehem, the city of his father David, he could not find a single place to repose his head; that he was constrained to borrow of the beasts a mansion for himself and his mother; that his cradle was a manger; and that it was in the very bosom of humiliation and baseness, he was willing to be adored by the angels and men, as the promised Messiah from the beginning of the world.

All this not only disagreed greatly with the notions of the Jews and their hopes, but with the magnificent promises of the prophets, and even with the words of the angel who announced his incarnation to Mary, and who had said, * "He shall be great, and shall be

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K

" called

* Luke i. 32.

PART “ called the Son of the Higheſt ; and the Lord
 IV. “ God ſhall give unto him the throne of his
 father David. And he ſhall reign over the
 “ houſe of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom
 “ there ſhall be no end.” All this, I ſay,
 appears ſo contrary to the general expectation,
 to the prophecies, and promiſes, that one
 could not counterfeit or imagine it before the
 event ; and nothing but the force of truth ſuſ-
 tained by miracles capable of ſilencing all re-
 flections and reaſoning, could make men be-
 lieve it, and afterwards write with confidence,
 that the whole univerſe would ſubmit to it.

A R T I C L E II.

Second reflection.

THIS firſt reflection is ſupported by an-
 other, which affects me prodigiouſly :
 for I conſider that the goſpel was not written
 till the glory of Chriſt was great amongſt the
 Jews and Gentiles, when they believed that he
 reigned in heaven, and they entertained of him
 the moſt auguſt and magnificent ideas. At
 preſent I pay little regard to what may be
 thought of the truth of theſe ideas, and whe-
 ther thoſe, who endeavoured to perſuade o-
 thers of it, were themſelves convinced. This
 point has been already handled, and I have
 reaſon to think, to ſatisfaction. I am content
 at preſent to leave the affair doubtful ; nay
 if

if they please, I will consent for a little CHAP. VI.
while, that they do not respect the apostles or
the evangelists as sincere witnesses of the re-
surrection and ascension of Christ; my rea-
soning will be only the more cogent. For is it
probable, that men who wanted to have Christ
acknowledged for the Messiah, and the Son of
God, and who were always particularly assiduous in convincing the Jews of this essential point, would have united all the mortifying circumstances which combated most their prejudices, and would have forged these circumstances equally opposite to their design and to truth; and that they should forge them at a time when a part of the world adored Christ as seated at the right-hand of his Father; and when the church of Jerusalem, equally zealous for his glory as other nations, acknowledged him as the immortal King, whom the prophets foretold and Abraham hoped for?

It follows then, that these mortifying circumstances must be true: and if they be true, without having been attended with others that counterballanced them, why were not they, who wrote them, offended? why did they not suppress them? why did they not substitute others more conformable to popular ideas, and apparently more worthy of God? why should they be sincere in all other points, and unfaithful in this recital alone of the apparition of the angels to the shepherds? Is it not evident, that without this apparition of angels they could make no use of the rest? that they had no interest in it, since it little concern'd them, that

PART an infant born in a stable, and put in a manger,
 IV. was the Messiah, if it was not true; and that
 this infant, rejected by men, whom no one
 could think of receiving for Christ at the time
 of his manifestation, since they believed that
 he was to be born at Nazareth, was taken for
 him without any other real gain than humilia-
 tion and ignominy?

If the evangelists and apostles had invented the apparition of the angels, would they have been content with this single fiction, and have related it with so much ingenuousness and modesty? would they not have likewise feign'd some divine vengeance upon the inhabitants of Bethlehem; some extraordinary light upon the manger where Christ was born; some external services performed by the angels to the son and mother; some change of the stable into a temple, and of the manger into a throne or altar; in short, every thing that might appear proper according to their imagination to set off a meanness, which in itself had nothing but what was despicable and forbidding? They were modest because sincere: they credited the humiliation without blushing at it, and the apparition which heightened it, without making any addition. The humiliation without the apparition could not have been respected; and the apparition, more worthy of Christ than any other miracle, was sufficient alone to make it revered.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE III.

Third reflection.

BESIDES, I do not believe that it was possible for men, who were not sincere, to confine the discourse of the angel to the shepherds, in the simple words related by St. Luke. They would doubtless have made him utter many things, in order to guard them against the impression that might arise from the mean appearance of an infant laid in a manger; to exhort them to adore him as the Son of the most High, and the heir of the throne of David, tho' rejected by an ungrateful and blind people; to make them sensible of the favour God shewed them, by making choice of them for the first adorers of his Son, and revealing to them a mystery unknown to every one else; and to exaggerate the crime of those, who being his natural subjects, nevertheless treated him as a stranger in his own kingdom, and even in the city of David his father.

They would have likewise given some sequel to this history, which concludes too soon for our curiosity; they would have marked out what became of the shepherds, what tradition they left to their family of so great an event: what share they or their descendents had in the establishment of the gospel: they would have preserved some remembrance of their conference with Mary, what they said to her, and

PART what they learnt by it : and, methinks, it may

IV. be safely presumed, that they would have not only done all this, or something like it, if they had forged the recital, but moreover that they would have done it, tho' sincere and honest, if the Spirit of God, superior to all human designs, had not restrained their pen. For it is evident, that many things are purposely suppressed, contrary to the fixed rules of history ; and that they would not have been concealed, if an extraordinary light had not conducted the historian.

For instance, was it natural to suppress what the shepherds said, when they saw Christ in a state so apt to excite compassion ; what they did to acknowledge him in quality of Messiah ; what they offered, or were willing to offer, to relieve his indigence, or to procure for him another retreat, or to have the honour of entertaining an immortal King ?

A R T I C L E IV.

Fourth reflection.

BUT was it not still less natural to leave Mary in silence ? to represent her only as a spectatrix, or as astonished at what she saw ; as learning new truths of shepherds ; as attentive to consider and compare them, and to fix between them an order and succession, converting the whole to her own instruction ? Would men, who were desirous to make her respected

respected as the mother of God without her CHAP.
being so, and who feigned an apparition of VI.
angels to shepherds, in order to honour the
birth of her son, would they, I say, have gi-
ven her a character so simple in appearance,
and so distant from the false notion of gran-
deur, that men, who intend to deceive, never
fail pursuing? As to myself, I perceive here
as much as in all the rest, the impresson and
characteristic of truth: and I defy falsehood
ever to invent any thing which on the one side
is so little probable, according to our capaci-
ties, and so great and perfect on the other,
pursuant to the rules of sublime virtue.

ARTICLE V.

Fifth reflection.

BUT what delights me more, and where-
in methinks I see still more plainly the
hand of God, is the discourse of the angel to
the shepherds, and afterwards the song of
thanksgiving of those who unite with him, in
giving glory to God for his reconciliation to
man. For unless they came from heaven, it is
impossible to say greater things in fewer words,
with more simplicity, or with more dignity.
“ Fear not (said the angel to the shepherds,
who were sore afraid at his presence, and at the
glory which shone round about him) “ for I
“ bring you good tidings of great joy, which
“ shall be to all people: for unto you is born

PART " this day in the city of David, a Saviour,

IV. " which is Christ the Lord: and this shall be

“ a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe
“ wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a
“ manger.” One must be well acquainted
with mysteries and the sublime of reason, to
speak thus of the greatest of mysteries, and of
the incarnation of the Word, without reflection,
without preparation, without any embellish-
ment of human eloquence. One must be very
conversant with the majesty of him, who be-
came an infant, and was in the cradle, in or-
der to unite these two opposite extremes, with-
out being embarrassed to reconcile them; and
to give as a distinction worthy of him who is
sovereign Lord, the swaddling-clothes in which
he was wrapped, and the cradle in which he
reposed. To this our ears, from the time we
have heard it, are now accustomed; but how
wonderful must such news have been at the
time it was proclaimed? and how unnatural
was it to be published in that manner?

“ And suddenly there was with the angel a
“ multitude of the heavenly host praising God,
“ and saying, Glory to God in the highest,
“ and on earth peace, good-will towards men.”

Behold, in three words, the motives and
fruit of the incarnation of the Son of God. But
who could have discovered them at first sight,
if the angels had not revealed them to man?
who could tell that before Christ, by assum-
ing human flesh, became the adorer of his
Father, God could not receive a glory worthy
of him? who could know the variance and

enmity between heaven and earth, before the CHAP.
God of heaven visited the earth, in order to VI.
be mediator? who is it that looked upon all
mankind, and even the Jews, as children of
anger and vengeance, before Christ putting
himself in the place of sinners, and loading
himself with their malediction, converted it
into a blessing, and drew upon them the love
and affection of his Father, of which he alone
is worthy?

These essential truths of religion, unknown
at that time to all mankind, and concealed in
the obscurity of the prophets, comprehend
the whole; and are themselves comprehended
in three words, but words so clear and simple,
that one must have been an angel to have ut-
tered them; and not be affected with the sub-
lime, to be insensible of their beauty.

A R T I C L E VI.

Sixth reflection.

MY sixth reflection is on the essential
part of the mystery itself, which can-
not be sifted without striking the mind with a
full conviction of its truth, and without ap-
pearing in all its circumstances truly worthy of
God. The Messiah was expected and desired,
but only in appearance. 'Twas another that
they desired instead of him; 'twas a vain phan-
tom they wished for. The true Messiah, the
enemy of a corrupt heart, was secretly de-
spised. He had no entrance to them; he could
find

PART find no place. Every thing was received except
 IV. him. 'Tis to represent him, that Christ is re-
 jected by all, even in Bethlehem: that in his
 own city, he is unknown and despised; and
 that he is a stranger even in the city of his
 father David, though there was his throne and
 empire.

Man was degraded; and since his fall he la-
 boured to disfigure the small remains of his
 original dignity. He was concerned at his
 immortality. He desired that his soul should
 perish with his body. He denied or dreaded
 the resurrection of the body, and placed him-
 self, as much as was in his power, upon a
 level with the brutes, neither hoping, nor de-
 siring any thing higher. Christ, in order to
 reproach and cure his degeneracy, placed him-
 self in the mean situation to which man was
 degraded. A stable and manger became us;
 and Christ, who was not incarnate for him-
 self, but for us, and who was desirous to re-
 semble sinners in every thing, sin excepted,
 made choice of a stable and manger, which
 were suitable to our condition.

Man knew no other than sensible grandeur.
 He knew no other manner of reigning, than
 that of earthly princes; no other victories,
 than those which are external, and no other
 than visible enemies. Christ by reducing him-
 self to infancy, poverty, misery, hath unde-
 ceived him in all these points. He hath reveal-
 ed to him a grandeur, whose whole value is
 known to faith; a felicity, a kingdom, victo-
 ries, of which that alone can be the arbitress:
 and

of the Christian Religion.

and at the same time he made himself the pat-CHA.
tern, law, consolation, strength, and remedy VI.
of man,

ARTICLE VII.

Seventh reflection.

THE last reflection, and which, in my opinion, enforces the others by an additional characteristic of truth, is, that Christ, by causing his coming to be revealed to shepherds, pursues in this his original plan and design. For he manifested himself to those to whom the promises were made; to shepherds like Abraham and Jacob; to men without mansions or towns, inhabitants under tents, and whose whole substance was their flock of sheep; to shepherds, who figured by their condition and watchings his mission to the sheep of Israel, his office of pastor, and his charity for the lambs committed to his charge: in fine, to men mean and despicable in the eyes of the world, such as those to whom the gospel was to be preached with success; whilst those who are great in Israel, either by authority, learning, or riches, are ignorant of what is revealed to them; God even then pointing out what he would afterwards do, by concealing from the wise and prudent, what he intended to disclose to the meek and humble.

I know

PART
IV.

I know not what judgment may be passed on these reflections: but the last, tho' it were singular, is capable of making great impressions upon a cool mind. For certainly 'tis not human wisdom, that preferred shepherds to the great and illustrious of Israel. Reason suggests no such thing; and the desire of doing honour to Christ, would never have prompted any such method. We should still think less of announcing his advent by angels to persons so insignificant, nor should we bring down from heaven a multitude of blessed spirits to celebrate in a canticle the reconciliation of heaven and earth before such mean and despicable witnesses.

But what could never enter the mind of man, was infinitely worthy of God, who has need of no one to be glorified, who forms his adorers himself; who generally makes choice of them amongst those whom the world despises; and who makes but little difference between the condition of angels, and that of persons who are but little attached to the earth, and who join disinterestedness, humility, and simplicity, with innocence.

Our business therefore is now no longer to doubt, but to profit by the miracle, and to learn of the angels, that he who is in a manger, is the Son of the most High, the Christ, the Lord, the immortal King, whose Kingdom is for ever, in a word, the promised Saviour. The discourse of the angels is neither enigmatical nor ambiguous. They declare openly

penly to the shepherds, what the apostles CHAP.
knew but latterly, and was revealed to Saint VI.
Peter by a particular grace. “There is born,
“they said, a Saviour, who is the Lord
“Christ.” The Samaritan, and the man born
blind, are the only persons to whom Christ
spoke thus plainly; and these two instances
joined to that of the shepherds, farther shew us,
that privileges are for the humble and meek;
and they are a melancholy presumption against
those who endeavour to attain the knowledge
of the truth of religion, by relying greatly
on their own light, and entertaining a high
opinion of their own understanding.

Adoration of the wise-men, conducted to Bethlehem by a miraculous star. Massacre of the infants, in Bethlehem and the neighbourhood. Proofs of the truth of these facts. Objections, which might be made to this recital, by those who have not yet embraced the Christian faith. General answers to these difficulties, which become proofs when attentively considered. Entire impossibility of denying facts thus connected with public history, and whose circumstances are all inseparable. Josephus's silence confirms the truth of the facts which he suppresses. A solution of those particular difficulties which are now become only simple questions. Mystery concealed under the history of the adoration of the wise men, which completely establishes the truth of it.

Whatever concerns the wise men is thus related by Saint Matthew: “ * Now
 “ when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea,
 “ in the days of Herod the king ; behold there
 “ came wise-men from the east to Jerusalem,
 “ saying, Where is he that is born king of the
 “ Jews? for we have seen his star in the east,
 “ and are come to worship him. When Herod
 “ the king had heard these things, he was
 “ troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And
 “ when he had gathered all the chief priests
 “ and

* Matth. ii. 1, &c.

“ and scribes of the people together, he de-
“ manded of them, where Christ should be

CHAP. VII.

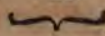
“ born. And they said unto him, in Bethle-
“ hem of Judea: for thus it is written by the
“ prophet; And thou Bethlehem in the land
“ of Juda, art not the least among the princes
“ of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Go-
“ vernor that shall rule my people Israel.
“ Then Herod, when he had privily called
“ the wise-men, enquired of them diligently
“ what time the star appeared. And he sent
“ them to Bethlehem, and said, Go, and search
“ diligently for the young child, and when ye
“ have found him, bring me word again, that
“ I may come and worship him also. When
“ they had heard the king they departed; and
“ lo, the star which they saw in the east, went
“ before them, till it came and stood over
“ where the young child was. When they
“ saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding
“ great joy. And when they were come into
“ the house, they saw the young child with
“ Mary his mother, and fell down and wor-
“ shipped him: and when they had opened
“ their treasures, they presented unto him gifts,
“ gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And
“ being warned of God in a dream, that they
“ should not return to Herod, they departed
“ into their own country another way.

“ Herod, when he saw that he was
“ mocked of the wise-men, was exceeding
“ wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the
“ children that were in Bethlehem, and in

PART " all the coasts thereof, from two years old
 IV. " and under, according to the time which
 " he had diligently enquired of the wise-men.
 " Then was fulfilled that which was spoken
 " by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama
 " was there a voice heard, lamentation and
 " weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weep-
 " ing for her children, and would not be
 " comforted, because they are not.

If what we have now read, be true, we need not hesitate to acknowledge Christ for the Light of the World, proclaimed by a miraculous Star; for the Messiah foretold by the prophets, who pointed out even the place of his birth; for the king of the Jews and Gentiles, adored by the shepherds and wise-men, the first-fruits of both; for the Son of God, clad with our mortal flesh, but whose reign will be eternal, as the mysterious presents of incense, myrrh, and gold, which were offered to him by the wise-men, imported. And then all our questions are finished; these essential points comprize all the rest, which are only an evident and necessary consequence.

But 'tis the truth of the recital on which these essential points are founded, that may be contested, and it is just to satisfy those, who are not sceptical about it merely from the spirit of opposition, but on the contrary desire, that their doubts may be resolved. As for the rest, who value themselves upon multiplying difficulties, by rejecting the most rational answers, 'tis God alone that must work a change

change in so untoward a disposition. And I CHAP.
look upon all human endeavours, with respect VII.
to them, as ineffectual. 

A R T I C L E I.

*Objections which may be made to this
recital, by those who have not yet em-
braced the Christian faith.*

LET us therefore listen to what a prudent, but not obstinate person, can object to a history, which we do not give as natural, but on the contrary we acknowledge to contain very great miracles. I comprehend not, says this person, how a star could have signified the birth of a prince, and much less how it could have shewn to strangers and infidels, the nativity of a king of the Jews. I do not see what interest these strangers could have in this king, nor how they could discern in the light of a star, that it was a duty incumbent on them to go and worship him. I perceive no probability in the conduct they observe in going to demand publicly in a country, which had already a king, and a king extremely jealous of his authority, where it was that the king of the Jews was born. Could men of foresight be guilty of such imprudence? and was there no other means of being secretly informed of an affair of this consequence, where the bare curiosity might give offence?

PART They ask where the child was born ; they
 IV. know then that he is a child. Was it not more
 proper, that they should wait till he was of age
 to reign, instead of setting out on a journey in
 order to find him, whilst he is as yet a child and
 in obscurity? Besides, what was the drift of their
 journey? they came suddenly; and in like
 manner they disappear. After this we know
 not what became of them. Is this then the
 fruit of so miraculous an event? and should
 we not expect something of more conse-
 quence, and more suitable to so great an ap-
 paratus?

The creation of a star on purpose to guide
 them in their journey, is somewhat shocking,
 and contrary to sound philosophy. They say
 nothing of its course, nor what was its eleva-
 tion above the earth, nor whether it appeared
 in the day-time, nor when it ceased to enlight-
 en the wise-men, who so greatly rejoiced at
 seeing it again, when they came out of Jeru-
 salem, only because doubtless it was intercept-
 ed from their sight before they entered it. We
 are ignorant, why the wise-men alone should
 profit by its appearance, and why they were
 not attended by many others, struck by the
 same spectacle, or invited by their example,
 and influenced by their discourse; for, since
 they discovered so many things in this new star
 of such importance, it was their duty, it seems,
 to communicate them to others, and to inform
 them, that a king should be born among the
 Jews, whom all mankind should adore.

Is

Is it credible, that the Jews, so full of the CHAP. expectation of the Messiah, should be content VII. with informing the wise-men where he was to be born, without joining in the search, or at least without sending deputies to accompany them, who might have brought them sure tidings, and to whom they could have given more credit than to strangers, who were ignorant of the scriptures?

In fine, the massacre of the infants at Bethlehem and the adjacent parts, is a fact, on one side so public, and on the other so extraordinary, that it could not be unknown to Josephus, who did not conceal the other crimes of Herod; (tho', in other respects, he seems to have too great an esteem for this prince) yet he says nothing of this. Is such a silence affected? and for what reason? all this embarrasses me, and I see too much or too little; for I perceive more difficulties than I would, and I have not knowledge sufficient to resolve them to my satisfaction.

ARTICLE II.

*General answer to these difficulties,
which become so many proofs, when
attentively considered.*

YOU would be therefore willing, I say to this person, to be able to remove all these difficulties, and then you would believe? But what occasion would you have to believe, if the whole was clear and easy? is not God at full liberty to conceal from us what he pleases? and has he no right demand the submission of our understanding till after every thing is explained? Take care not to confound two very different things: we ought to be certain of the facts we believe; yet it is not necessary that all these facts be within the reach of our capacities. The authority of scripture is great: great also is the testimony of a contemporary, sincere, and well inform'd author, such as an evangelist prepared to lay down his life in order to attest what he writes; and actually martyred for it. The authority of Josephus cannot be put in comparison with his, tho' he even affirmed the contrary, or reported the fact in a different manner; whereas the question relates only to his silence, which was affected, and the cause of which we shall, at a proper time, explain.

But independent of these general reflections, I do not hesitate in believing, what I find in

Saint Matthew, and nothing determines me so much, setting aside the certainty of the revelation, as this multitude of apparent difficulties which stagger the faith of the person with whom I am now conversing; for they manifestly prove, that this narration is not founded upon probability, the common source of false histories. I might be diffident, if every thing which is capable of raising astonishment and surprize, was explained; if they had taken the trouble to remove or prevent my difficulties; if they had foreseen my questions, and if they had attempted to satisfy my curiosity upon all the points which engage and excite it. An ingenious man, who had a mind to be credited without deserving it, would have known what obstacles he should meet with; and at least he would have said something of the omnipotence of God, and of the necessity that our reason should submit to his wisdom, which would have served as a specious veil to improbable fictions.

But see what the evangelist says, to whom we cannot impute the default of knowledge and understanding. “ * Now when Jesus was born in “ Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the “ king, behold, there came wise-men from the “ east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that “ is born king of the Jews? for we have seen “ his star in the east, and are come to worship “ him.” ’Tis in this concise recital, that all the incredible part consists, and the rest is only a dependence on it. What precaution does the

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evan-

* Matth. ii. 1, 2.

PART evangelist take in order to be believed? with

IV. what confidence and simplicity does he not relate these wonders? can we imagine, that he was not as sensible as we of the marvels they contain? how comes it then, that he did not seem astonished, and that he was so little concerned at the surprize it was likely to give us? 'Tis because he related a public fact, known throughout all Judea and the neighbouring countries, that he was enjoined to write it, exactly as it is, and that he had no command to explain it to us, or to insert his own reflections. He knew that God would enforce the truth of it to those whom he designed to render faithful; and he was well persuaded, that it is not by satisfying our curiosity, that we are prepared to believe.

A R T I C L E III.

Intire impossibility of denying facts so connected with public history, and whose circumstances are inseparable.

I HAVE already observed, that faith hath something certain, but not always probable, for its object. It is therefore of very little signification to know in what manner every thing happened which we read in Saint Matthew, or how it can be reconciled with our notions; but it is of the greatest moment to be thoroughly convinced, that it really came to pass. And how is it possible for us to deny,

deny, or even to doubt of it? was there ever CHAP.
a revelation interwoven with general history, VII.
which had more witnesses, whose circum-
stances were less incident to alteration and
change, and where there was a less possibility
of mixing falsehood?

Strangers, who were either princes in their country, or philosophers, or both together, as the name of magi may import, come from a distant country, not to an obscure village, but to Jerusalem, and demand where the king of the Jews was born. They ask Herod himself, who instantly comprehends that they meant the nativity of the Messiah, that is to say, of the most interesting subject with regard to the nation and himself, pursuant to the suspicions which his ambition and mistrust suggested. He convenes the most solemn and numerous council, where the chief of the sacerdotal families, and men of the greatest knowledge in religion attend. The answer of the council is precise. The prophet Micah is quoted upon the nativity of the Messiah at Bethlehem. The prince sends the magi or wise-men thither, after having held a private conference with them, in which he gains all the insight, that appeared necessary to him, concerning the time when the star had begun to appear, and in respect to other circumstances which were not concealed from him as from us, and which served only to render him more cautious in his wicked design. The wise-men publicly quitted Jerusalem, but did not return thither. At first their clandestine retreat was imputed to the

PART shame of being deceived. But the new report

IV. which was spread at Jerusalem, that Christ was born, that an holy old man, inspired by God, had embraced him in his arms when they presented him to the Lord in the temple ; and that a widow, respectable for her eminent virtue, and gift of prophecy, had discovered him to all the congregation: this new report, I say, and this new concourse, made Herod imagine, that the wise-men had found out more than he intended, and that 'twas he, and not they, who was deluded. And at that time, giving himself up wholly to his jealousy, and foolishly expecting to destroy the Messiah, with the rest of the infants at Bethlehem, he commanded the massacre of them in that city, and the adjacent parts, from two years old and under, according to the calculation he had made of the appearance of the star, after having consulted with the wise-men. Such a cruelty filled the country with blood and tears. There was no doubt made, but that this was the accomplishment of the fatal prediction uttered by Jeremy: and Saint Matthew quotes the prophecy as a thing known, and which every body applied to this strange event.

After such a summary, let them tell me, what circumstance can they omit, and what change can they make? the whole must necessarily be either true or false. The wise-men and their star must be a fiction not known to Jerusalem, to Herod, to the priests, to the council of the nation; Herod must never have thought

thought of calling the assembly, to demand CHAP.
where the Messiah should be born ; and the VII.
answer of that council must have been imaginary ; there must not have been a drop of blood shed at Bethlehem ; and Saint Matthew must have been withal the most impious and stupid of all men, to have falsely attributed such a barbarity to Herod, and to have hoped that such a barbarity, not only false but incredible, which no one had heard mention of, should contribute to authorize another * fiction equally as incredible in its kind, which no one knew of, and in which nevertheless he appealed to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the whole court as witnesses.

Whom will they persuade that so foolish a thought should enter the mind, I do not say, of a virtuous or honest man, but of one that had any spark of reason ? that he should dare to write it in Judea, and at the time when the imposture might have been so easily detected ? that he wrote it in the language of the country and not in Greek, as the other apostles had done † ; and that he should place this silly fable at the beginning of an history, in which he affirmed that all the facts were indubitable, and which he laid down as the foundation of religion and piety ?

* The coming of the wise-men.

† Ancient tradition informs us that Saint Matthew wrote the gospel in Hebrew, such as the Jews then spoke.

ARTICLE IV.

Josephus's silence confirms the truth of the facts which he suppresses.

Josephus's silence with respect to the massacre of the infants, and the occasion thereof, very far from being a proof to the contrary, most clearly, methinks, establishes its truth. This historian, who saw Jerusalem and the temple reduced to ashes, his country desolate, and his countrymen captives or dispersed; and who had imbibed, in common with the rest of the Jews, a wrong notion of the Messiah; either lost his courage and despaired of the promises, or by a sordid flattery assigned the effect of them to Vespasian, who had been elected emperor, when he commanded in Judea, and who afterwards having subdued all the provinces, appeared to this man, who was either deluded or a deluder, to unite the two qualities of the Messiah, who should begin to reign in Judea, and from thence to extend his empire throughout the whole world.

However it is certain, that Josephus was not afraid to look upon Vespasian as the king whom the prophets had foretold; and by that means he put himself under a necessity of absolutely suppressing the relation of the wise-men, and the consequence of it; because he could not have wrote it without discovering that the king of the Jews, agreeable to the prophets and the
decision

decision of the first tribunal of the nation, was CHAP. VII.
to be born at Bethlehem: without likewise discovering that he had reason to believe, that he was indeed born there at the time of Herod; and without informing Vespasian that Herod's cruel precautions had proved ineffectual with regard to the Messiah; that prince being too wise and too clear-sighted, to imagine that an infant destined by providence to reign over the whole earth, and for a long time promised by inspired men, should be involved in a general massacre.

Instead therefore of opposing the recital of the evangelist to Josephus's silence, this silence on the contrary must be looked on as a confirmation of the recital of the evangelist; for the cause of this silence is now known, and this cause supposes the truth of all the facts which he suppresses.

ARTICLE V.

A particular solution of those difficulties, which can no longer be considered but as simple questions.

WITH regard to the other questions to which they give the air of objections and difficulties, there would be no inconveniency in leaving them unanswered. For difficulties of this kind are never allowed to prevail against facts, whose certainty is demonstrated; and especially when these facts relate to religion,
and

PART and are likewise mysteries. Yet I do not refuse, endeavouring to explain them, and I require but two things: the one is, to take my conjectures only for what they are: the other is, not to reject them till you find better.

IV.

I am apt to think that the country from whence the wise-men came, and which the scripture stiles the East, is Arabia. In fact it is situated to the east of Judea; and from other passages of scripture it is proved, that the Arabians are called children of the East; and the presents of the wise-men suit better with Arabia than any other country.

The term of magi, or wise-men, is ambiguous: it may signify dignity, science, a kind of priesthood, and also magic. This last sense should be excluded; all the rest may be admitted, whether united or separated.

The star was much nearer the earth than the planets or fixed stars, otherwise its course must have been observed but very slowly, and it could not have distinctly marked out one country rather than another. It sensibly advanced every day from East to West, not from the East of the world, but from the East with respect to Judea. It is probable that it appeared only at night, but being destined to conduct the wise-men, it regulated its celerity according to their diligence, and stopped in the day-time if the wise-men only travelled by night; or that if they pursued their journey by day, following very near the direct line which it had marked out to them the preceding night, they found it vertical, or perpen-

perpendicular to the place where they arrived CHAP.
at the end of the day's journey. The motion VII.
of the column of cloud or of fire in the desert, {
may serve to explain that of the star.

Thus it daily confirmed the wise-men, by this exact proportion and measure of its course with their motion and rest, that it was sent for them; and that Judea, towards which it always advanced, was the destin'd end of their and its own progress. But when they were arrived at the frontiers, it disappeared, and by disappearing, constrained the wise-men to address themselves to the Jews, in order to learn of men what the heavens pointed out no farther.

This they did very discreetly, and without transgressing the rules of the most severe decorum. For they did not seek a common king, and curiosity was not the motive of their journey, but religion. They knew that the Jews hoped for this king, and that Herod himself had an interest in knowing him. They came to adore him, and they reasonably thought that the Jews and their prince would set them the example; because this new-born prince, whose mystery their faith had revealed to them, would not displace any temporal prince, but would only reign over their minds, and renounce all the external grandeur of their kings. This they sufficiently made known, by saying that they came to adore him tho' he was an infant; but they shewed it in a manner which left no doubt, by prostrating themselves immediately
before

PART before him, tho' reduced to extreme indigence,
 IV. and laid in a manger.

It would be a very great mistake to imagine, that they were only that moment informed of what they were in search of: they sought the Messiah promised to the Jews, such as the scriptures promised to them, and not such as the Jews figured to themselves; and before the Jews had shewn their indifference or hatred towards him, they could not have suspected them to be of such cruel dispositions.

It would be ridiculous to think that they had gained so much information by the sight alone of a miraculous star. Perhaps the famous prophecy of Balaam, * "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel," pronounced on the frontiers of Arabia, was preserved in the country. Perhaps the queen of Sheba, who reigned in † Arabia, and who came to consult Solomon at a time when the promise of the Messiah came to be fixed on the house of David, and when Solomon publickly passed for one of his most express figures, had learnt of that prince this most important truth, and had taught it to a great many of his subjects. Perhaps a more precise and circumstantiated revelation had united all these scattered lights, and had shewn to the wise-men the actual accomplishment

* Numb. xxiv. 17. 1 Kings xx.

† She is called in St. Luke xi. 31. *Βασίλισσα νότου*, queen of the South, with relation to Arabia, one part of which was called Austral or Meridional, or according to the language of the country, *isman*, on the right-hand; the South bearing that name, because a person turned to the East had the North on the left, and the South on the right.

ment in the birth of Christ; and this last con-
jecture to me appears the only true one, all
the other means being too indeterminate and
confused, to be able to influence the wise-men
to seek a new-born king of the Jews, and to
make them so certain of his nativity, that they
had no occasion to learn of the Jews the place
where he was born.

Of this we shall be thoroughly convinced,
if we recollect that the wise-men, after having
adored Christ at Bethlehem, received warning
from heaven in a dream, not to go to Herod,
but to return into their own country another
way than they came; for it is natural to ima-
gine, that they had been instructed and en-
lightened by the same method, before they
† set out on the journey. And indeed it ap-
peared that this last warning from heaven did
not astonish them, and that they did not he-
sitate to obey it, as they had already received
another of the same kind, whose certainty was
known to them.

The last questions * which remain to be
resolved, are explained in this manner: The
wise-men punctually obeyed the command they
received from heaven; they observed the pre-
cautions enjoined; they mentioned or kept the
secret according to their instructions; and from
what they did we learn what they were en-
joined to do.

But

† Χρηματισθέντες κατ' ὄναρ.

* Why the wise-men did not relate to many what they knew?
and why, if they did relate it, they had not many followers?

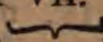
PART But why did not the Jews accompany them ?
 IV. why did they not at least send deputies with them ? The deputies chosen by providence, in the name of the Jewish people, were the shepherds, who had enjoyed the privilege of being the first adorers of the Messiah : the wise-men came afterwards in the name of the Gentiles, and according to the mystery which God designed to figure by the circumstances of their departure and their arrival at Jerusalem, it was not fit that the Jews should do any more than open the scriptures for them, and put the predictions of the Messiah into their hands, without making any advantage to themselves.

A R T I C L E VI.

Mystery concealed under the history of the adoration of the wise-men, which completely demonstrates the truth of it.

BUT we must not so lightly pass over a mystery, which is a sensible demonstration of the truth of the historical recital, and which discovers with what sagacity the eternal council of God had disposed all the external events, in order to render them subservient to our instruction, and to make them predictions of futurity.

We have already said in another place, that the scriptures and promises were only entrusted
 to

to the Jewish people, that the Gentiles were CHAP.
strangers with respect to the covenant †, and VII.
that in this world they were without God, 
since they had relinquished him for vain idols;
and without a Messiah, since he was unknown
to them. Hence it is that the shepherds are
called from the neighbouring fields of Beth-
lehem, as domestics of the faith; and that the
wise-men are called from afar off, that is, from
the utmost parts of Arabia, as plunged in the
blindness of infidelity.

A single word is sufficient for the shepherds,
and immediately they comprehend it. The
angels said, "There is born unto you a Sa-
viour, which is Christ the Lord:" and they
instantly set out on their journey to adore him,
without standing in need of a guide, and with-
out being obliged to ask the meaning of what
the scriptures imported. But the whole is new
to the wise-men: they were in want of a guide
in a strange and unknown path; they were
disconcerted when it became invifible, and then
they were obliged to desire the Jewish people
in a public manner to consult the scriptures for
them.

The Jews, accustomed to so sacred a com-
merce with God, and to visions of divine spi-
rits, were instructed by them, as by their bre-
thren and equals. But the Gentiles had only
the phænomena of nature, and the external
light

† "Strangers from the covenants of promise, without Christ
and without God in the world." Eph. ii. 12.

"Preached peace to you, which were afar off, and to them
that were nigh." Ver. 17.

PART light of the sun and stars ; and 'tis thus that

IV. the wise-men were enlightened, yet with this
 difference between them and the other Gentiles, that a new star is created in their favour, and that a private revelation communicated to them whilst asleep, taught them the use and design of the star, because the whole ancient beauty of nature, and the whole ancient light of heaven, were unprofitable to them, as the new star would be likewise, without a revelation, which nature alone could not bestow.

The belief of the Messiah reunited the two people, Jews and Gentiles, because there was no other name by which mankind could be saved. Yet the Gentiles are neither the principal tree nor the root. They were grafted on a true olive-tree, being naturally only a wild stock : they were engrafted there contrary to order, and their ancient origin. Hence it is that the wise-men came to Jerusalem, that they asked the Jews, that they received of them the prophecies and the ancient scriptures : that the perfection of the particular revelation which they received, came from Israel, and that by its conformity with the prophecies it is judged sure and infallible.

But through God's designs the Gentiles will reap more advantage from the scriptures, than the Jews. The latter will give them to the former quite entire ; they will leave every thing untouched which relates to the Messiah ; they will religiously preserve the predictions of his nativity and death, yet will make no application of them to Christ : the Gentiles will there behold

behold nothing else but him; the Jews will see quite another thing. Hence the Jews in general give a good account of the Messiah, but they do not draw any consequence from their own answer with respect to Christ: and on the contrary, the wise-men determine the general answer of the Jews to the person of Christ, and they alone profit by the scriptures, which the Jews consulted for them. CHAP. VII.

After the Gentiles shall have been instructed in the faith by the Jews, they will be obliged to withdraw from them. The christian church will now be composed of nations formerly noted for infidelity; and people coming from the East and West, the North and South, will take place at the marriage feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whilst the children of the kingdom, of which they were natural heirs, will be excluded and banished. 'Tis thus that the wise-men were enjoined not to return to Jerusalem, to avoid all commerce with the Jews in their journey, and to take a rout they were wholly unacquainted with.

The combination against the Messiah succeeds by the indifference of the Jews to his coming: Herod was desirous to know him only in order to kill him; and all his people either consented to it, or were little disquieted at it. But the Messiah found his asylum in Egypt; and he remained there unknown to the Jews, whilst they destroyed the infants of Bethlehem, and the adjacent parts, desiring to sacrifice in each of them the Saviour himself, and persecute him alone in the person of these innocents.

PART This is the last figure intended by divine

IV. Providence in this relation. After the first-fruits of Israel were reserved by grace, the residue of the nation were wholly given up to their infatuation and infidelity. Christ, as Joseph formerly did, withdraws into Egypt, and is there adored by those who acknowledge him their Saviour. The believing Jews were persecuted with rigor by their carnal brethren; they were stifled as it were in the cradle; and like the infants of Bethlehem, they lost their lives for Christ, who was persecuted in their person, without being able to leave successors of their faith, being cropt as a flower, and before the age of manhood. 'Tis thus that the Jews were deprived of an holy posterity, and by renouncing the Messiah, they immerfed the hopes and resource of Israel in the blood of his martyrs; until tidings came to Egypt, that all the enemies of Christ were dead, and it pleased him, who never repents of his liberality, to be reconciled to his ancient people, without forsaking those whom he had acquired during his banishment.

I have supposed in the beginning of this chapter, that I was debating this matter with a sensible and docil person: may I now ask him his opinion of the difficulties, which staggered him? does he find them now so strong? does he believe them capable to ballance the authority of the gospel, or to render doubtful so public an history, blended with so many circumstances, which it was impossible to invent, and write in the midst

midst of Judea, at a time when their falshood CHAP.
would have only served to convict the evan- VII.
gelist of imposture? does he not now observe, }
that what offended him was necessary, and con-
certed in the designs of God; that it would
have been an evil and disorder, if the cir-
cumstances had been otherwise disposed; and
that what was displeasing at first to human
prudence, had, according to a superior and
divine wisdom, its particular reasons which
the mystery concealed? In fine, does he not
see that it was impossible the mind of man should
feign things, which the Spirit of God would
convert to prophecies; and that it was God
alone, who could cause so mysterious an hi-
story to be written in a manner so adapted to
his designs, and in which the historian has in-
serted every thing which faith should know, and
suppressed every thing to which curiosity should
be a stranger?

Testimony of the eternal Father given to Christ in his baptism, proved in a sensible and convincing manner by the circumstances of the history, by important reflections, and by the explication of the mystery concealed in the baptism of Christ. Circumstances, which were preparatory for this testimony, and which accompanied it. The use which an honest and sincere person should make of so decisive a testimony, given under such circumstances. Answer to some objections. Proofs of the truth and certainty of the testimony of the heavenly Father, which we ought to look upon as demonstrations. Farther proofs, equal to demonstrations, drawn from the mystery of the baptism of Christ, which is visibly superior to all human inventions.

“ **I** Have greater witness, said Christ †, than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. * It is also written in your law (he said again) That the testimony of two men is true. I am one that beareth witness of myself (by my miracles) and the
“ Father

† John v. 36.

* John viii. 17. Deut. xvii. 6.

"Father that sent me beareth witness of
"me." CHAP. VIII.

The Father hath indeed borne witness of Christ on many occasions, but principally in his baptism and transfiguration; and 'tis this great testimony, a testimony so majestic, so worthy of being credited, and of removing by its authority all our doubts, that we are going to consider in this chapter, in order first to establish its certainty, and secondly to draw proper consequences from it.

ARTICLE I.

Circumstances, which were preparatory for this testimony, and accompanied it.

THEN cometh * Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.

It is therefore certain, that Saint John at that time knew Christ, and that it was not the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove after the baptism, which informed him. And it is consequently certain, that at another time he had seen the same Spirit descend and remain upon him; since by this sign he was

M 4

to

* Matth. iii. 13.

PART to know him, as God had revealed to him,

IV. when he sent him to baptize and preach repentance. "I knew him not, he said †, but
 "he that sent me to baptize with water, the
 "same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt
 "see the Spirit descending and remaining on
 "him, the same is he that baptizeth with the
 "Holy Ghost: I saw the Spirit descending
 "from heaven, like a dove, and it abode upon
 "him. I saw and bare record, that this is
 "the Son of God." Nevertheless this testimony, which had a personal relation to Christ, was not made public before his baptism; and John kept it secret, till he came himself, and by his humility forced him to publish it.

These circumstances, which we sometimes confound, tend to explain the history, and to shew, that Christ had been already acknowledged by Saint John before his baptism, by a sign intirely similar to that which succeeded it; that this was the reason Saint John publicly and strongly resisted, and that this resistance doubtless contributed very much to engage the attention of all the spectators to Christ and himself.

The number of these spectators was great, since, according to the evangelist, all the people flocked to be baptized *, and the lively exhortations of Saint John, and his example, had long since induced every one to repent.

And

† John i. 32, 33, 34.

* "When all the people were baptized, Jesus being also baptized and praying, the heaven was opened." Luke iii. 21.

And it was impossible that these spectators^{CHAP.} should be unattentive, when the heavenly Father sent forth his voice, or that they should apply it to any other than Christ; because besides that they had been prepared by the humble resistance which John had shewn him, to regard him as an extraordinary man, or even as the Messiah, this voice was not heard till after two circumstances, which expressly pointed him out: the one, that Christ prayed upon the banks of Jordan immediately after his baptism, which drew the eyes of the multitude upon him: and the other, that the heavens opened above him †, and the Holy Ghost descended on him in the exterior and visible symbol of a dove, and lighted upon his head; for 'twas then they heard this voice issuing from heaven, "Thou art my beloved || Son, in thee I am well pleased."

† "The heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." Luke iii. 22.

|| Σὺ εἶς ὁ υἱός μου. My true Son, my own Son.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE II.

The use that an honest and sincere person should make of so decisive a testimony, given under such circumstances. Answer to some objections.

SUPPOSE then that we were present at this spectacle, and saw every thing which preceded it: how should we have been able not to look upon Christ as the only Son of God, publicly acknowledged as such by his Father? And after having adored him in this quality, how could we have helped blindly resigning ourselves to him, and hearing him as truth itself? We knew, that John long since proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, but added, that he was concealed in the crowd of people, and unknown to himself. He said, that he came down from heaven, and would baptize men with the Holy Ghost; yet he left us in hopes, and kept us in suspense. Now the secret is discovered: John, who treated the Jews even to the very pharisees as a race of vipers, and who knew that all indiscriminately needed repentance, refuses to baptize a man, who demands it of him, humbles himself before him as before his purifier, and thus publicly declares, that he is the Messiah, whose fore-runner he was, and of whom he had so long preached. After having expected and been prepared so long, can we help being affected

fects with so public and wished-for a declaration? and those who are witnesses of it with us, can they be indifferent to it, or deny their attention? CHAP. VIII.

The eyes of every one follow the man, whom John only through obedience baptized; he prays at his coming out of Jordan: we all observe him in this condition with a new attention. The heavens open; a dove, which descends from thence, rests upon his head: we begin then to perceive, that he himself is descended from heaven; and at the time that we are full of this thought, we hear an heavenly voice, which could be only that of the eternal Father, who acknowledged him for his well-beloved Son, the sole object of his love and complacency. Is it possible for us to be then mistaken, or to fall into such a blindness?

But this is the very thing, says a mistrustful and fearful man, which makes me afraid, that this history is not in all its circumstances as certain as I could wish: for if the whole happened as it is written, I cannot conceive why the whole multitude did not believe in Christ, nor why they hesitated a moment to hear him with an entire docility, whom the heavenly Father had so publicly declared to be his only Son. Is it possible, that so many ocular witnesses did not from that time become his disciples? is it probable that they did not relate such a wonder to a great many people, or that they were not believed, or if they were believed, that those who heard them, should make no use of a thing of this consequence? One would think that after such a miracle

PART miracle they could not desire another, and that
IV. all the questions were resolved.

~~~~~ You imagine then, I shall answer him, that miracles suffice to give a sincere faith, and lead to a true righteousness? You imagine then that when ocular witnesses relate a true miracle to those that were absent, these cannot doubt it, and that they must make a good use of it, since they cannot doubt it? And very likely you imagine that a faithful recital of a miracle does not deserve less to be credited, when it is written, than when related *vivâ voce*. How comes it then that you doubt of this which passed before witnesses, who were at first disciples of John, and afterwards of Christ? Why do you refuse to yield to the testimony of the evangelists, cotemporary authors, who were so well informed, and so sincere? and how would you have the truth of the most certain facts come down to us, if all the canals, through which it is to be transmitted, are suspicious?

All the witnesses, you say, of such a wonder, should from that time have become disciples of Christ. Many were indeed brought over: but you must have little knowledge of mankind to imagine them all capable of being much affected with miracles, which are not the object of their passions, and which even tend to repress their concupiscence and lust. They at first beheld them with admiration; they spoke of them with joy; they thought themselves happy in having beheld them: but their heart, which remained obdurate, soon  
diverted



diverted them from a thought which was opposite to self-love, and procured none of those pleasures it desired: and those who heard them spoken of, being less sensibly affected than those who had ocular demonstration, sooner lost the idea, and forgot them. There must be something more durable and more internal, than sight or memory, to convert men, and to make them sincere disciples of Christ; and we may easily reconcile the historical credit of a miracle which proves him to be the Son of God, with a great indifference to his morality, and to goods which he only promises after death.

I agree to it, says again the same mistrustful and fearful man, and your reflections appear better founded than my crude notions; but I have still a certain dread and tremor, which impedes my thoroughly crediting a miracle, that would be truly decisive, had I a full and complete evidence of its certainty.

I am concerned (I reply to him) that one is continually obliged to prove to you the sincerity of the evangelists, tho' you have reaped no benefit from so many things which have been said to establish it, and of which you seemed so often convinced. But the goodness of God, who foresaw your imbecillity, hath diversified a thousand ways the proofs of the christian religion, and the principal facts upon which it is established; and I hope that on this occasion they will be as plain to you, as they have been on many others.

## ARTICLE III.

*Proofs of the truth and certainty of the testimony of the heavenly Father, which we ought to look upon as demonstrations.*

I Think, you know, that the baptism of Saint John was only a baptism of repentance, preparative to that of the Messiah; that it justified no one, but only declared the sinful state of those who received it, without any other advantage than of exciting sentiments of humiliation and repentance, joined to the hopes of pardon thro' Christ, which was only promised \*.

Would you have ever dreamt of subjecting to such a baptism a person you had acknowledged, or desired that the whole world should acknowledge as the Messiah? would you have judged such an humiliation compatible with the majesty of the Son of God? would you have confounded the Saviour of man with the crowd of sinners? would you have subjected the Holy of Holies to the baptism of his fore-runner and ambassador, who prepared the way for him? is it just to imagine, that what was so very remote from your thoughts, should enter into other people's heads? is it reasonable to attribute to rational men, who intended to gain credit by probability, what appeared to you as mere folly, or perhaps

\* Acts xix. 4.



perhaps would never have occurred to your CHAP.  
imagination? VIII.

Was it not in their power to feign any other occasion, more suitable to the majesty of the Father, and sanctity of the Son? and if they were willing, that the heavens should open upon Christ, a dove light upon his head, and a heavenly voice declare him the Son of God in the presence of those who came to the baptism of John; was it not infinitely more natural to cause all this to happen whilst John resisted his humility, than after his baptism had in some measure degraded him, by seemingly ranking him among the number of sinners?

How could the evangelists believe, that it was consentaneous with justice and equity, that he who was most eminently just, should submit to a ceremony established for sinners? and yet they make Christ to say \*, that it was just and necessary for him to submit. Upon what could they ground such a kind of necessity? and how could a thing so difficult to conceive after the event, appear to them a prescribed and rigorous duty?

But tho' we were to dissemble all this, how could we ever find either justice or consistency in the design of the evangelists, who make Christ ‡ retire into the desert for forty days immediately after this public and august testimony,

\* "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Mark. iii. 15.

‡ "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness." Matth. i. 12.

"Jesus returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Luke iv. 1.

PART mony, which his Father had given of him?

IV. Was this then the time to conceal him from man, and by this kind of flight to frustrate all the hopes of so great a prodigy? is it thus that men think? if the liberty of fiction was granted them, would they make so quick a transition from such glory to such an obscurity? and in this obscurity, would they permit Satan to vaunt himself before his master and his judge, that all the kingdoms of the earth are his, to transport him to different places, and to demand adoration of him, without causing Christ to say any thing that clearly expressed his condition and divinity?

I dare affirm, without fear of being contradicted by any ingenuous person, that such circumstances could not be written if they had not happened, and that very far from being looked upon as probabilities, the first effect they produced was surprize and astonishment, and that without the divine stamp the mind of man would have rejected them as incredible.

But what is wonderful, and may be always considered as the characteristic of the works of God, the less the mind of man is capable to invent any such thing, the more he admires the wisdom, œconomy, and motives thereof, when he is enlightened by faith. Of this I shall endeavour now to convince such as will please to listen to me with docility and attention.



ARTICLE IV.

*Farther proofs equal to demonstrations,  
drawn from the mystery of the bap-  
tism of Christ, which is visibly supe-  
rior to all human inventions.*

THE Son of God became man, not for himself, but for us: 'tis in our name that he was incarnate, and his humanity represented us all. This humanity was infinitely holy, yet destined to represent sinners; and as it was incapable of sin, it could only take our external resemblance, always compatible with a perfect innocence.

Beside this external resemblance, which consists in a passible and mortal flesh, Christ is charged with all our iniquities, in order to abolish them. In this sense he put himself in our place; he was not only our priest, but our victim; and he consented that whatever we are indebted to the divine justice, should be imputed to him.

Very far then from separating his cause from that of sinners, he put himself in their place. He charitably assumed the place and name of Esau. He came in this quality to the baptism of Saint John, and it was right he should come, since it was right he should represent us, and receive our repentance.

If the baptism of John had remitted sins, Christ would not have received it, because he

PART was without spot. He could not even  
IV. have received it without degrading himself,  
and in some measure owning, that justice should be restored to us by another channel than his own. But the acknowledgment of our sins, and the acceptance of our repentance, by submitting to a baptism, which did not remit sins, but only declared them worthy of repentance, were the effect of his charity and innocence. And if he could have become more holy, it would have been by so eminent a degree of compassion.

But the mystery of this compassion and charity was unknown to man, who could confound the Lamb, who bore the sins of the world, and who expiated them by bearing them, with the sinners of whom he was the victim; and it is upon this account, that after Christ seemed to mix with them, the heavenly Father distinguished him not only as just and innocent, but as his only Son, as the object of his love and complacency, and as the cause of his good-will towards mankind.

And by this distinction, God not only bore witness to his Son, but taught us, that if Christ was not his true and proper Son, he could not without temerity offer himself to him as a security for sinners, nor expect to reconcile them to him by his sacrifice; that he must be the source of justice to be able to communicate it; and must be the principle of the spirit of grace and love, to have the power of diffusing it on the unworthy. Otherwise the apparent humility of Christ would have been real pride:  
his



his repentance in our name would have been CHAP.  
unprofitable to us: and our sins, by crushing VIII.  
him who had pretended to be able to expiate  
them, tho' he was only a creature, and had  
only a borrowed righteousness, must have re-  
mained upon our own heads. 'Tis therefore in  
his most profound humiliation, and at the time  
of his public penance, if we may thus speak,  
that Christ ought to be acknowledged by his  
eternal Father for his true Son: otherwise his  
ministry, how humble soever in appearance,  
is above his capacity; and our hopes in him,  
in his tears and repentance, is vain and ill-  
grounded.

It is therefore no longer astonishing, that,  
after so august a declaration on the side of his  
Father, Christ hastens to commence our  
penance in the desert; because this declara-  
tion was only to confirm his design of suffering  
and mortifying himself for us, and to give sinners  
a thorough confidence in him. If he had shewn  
himself to men after such a testimony in order  
to receive the glory of it, he would have lost  
sight of his principal design; he would have  
appeared to have needed this testimony for him-  
self, whereas it was necessary for us; and he  
would not have known that the greatest and  
most pressing of our evils was pride, and by that  
it was necessary to commence our cure.

Hence no longer need we be surprized, that  
being loaded with all the imprecations and  
maledictions due to sinners, as another scape-  
goat driven into the desert, he did not refuse  
the devil the external power of tempting him,

PART of speaking to him with a kind of authority,  
 IV. and of transporting him to different places. He  
 represented those who had been delivered to  
 Satan by their crimes. He intended to free  
 them from their captivity by righteousness, and  
 not by force. And he would not oppose him  
 with any other arms, than those which sinners  
 ought to employ against him, that is, fasting,  
 silence, retreat, prayer, mortification, tears,  
 and the holy use of the scriptures.

Thus, every thing that appeared unreasonable  
 and ill-concerted in the eyes of human pru-  
 dence, is great, sublime, and divine, when com-  
 pared with the designs of God on Christ and  
 ourselves. And this wonderful agreement be-  
 tween so many things, apparently contrary to  
 the point of view that unites them, and which  
 shews the use and necessity of them, is a com-  
 plete demonstration, that God alone concerted  
 the whole, without any interposition of human  
 invention.

C H A P.



C H A P IX.

*Promises of the miracle of the transfiguration made under very important circumstances: accomplishment of this promise. Certainty of the miracle proved by simple and natural reflections. Farther and more particular proofs of this miracle, which render the truth of it more obvious. The mystery of the transfiguration not only was, but must have been, true and real. Necessary relation of all the circumstances of this mystery, with the designs of God. Explication of some other important circumstances in these words, Hear him.*

A R T I C L E I.

*Promise of the miracle of the transfiguration made under very important circumstances: accomplishment of this promise.*

C H R I S T had foretold the mystery of the transfiguration, a few days before its accomplishment, and the evangelists \* mention upon what occasion he foretold it. Saint Peter having acknowledged him as the Christ, Son of the living God, he enjoins this apostle, and his other disciples, not to tell any one, and he added that he must go up to Jeru-

N 3

\* Matth. xvi. Mark viii.

PART Jerusalem, that he should suffer many things,  
 IV. and be put to death. Saint Peter reject-  
 ed this prediction as a disgrace, and we  
 know in what manner Christ answered him.  
 Yet he was not satisfied with particularly  
 rebuking him, “\* he called his disciples, and  
 “ all the people, and said unto them, If any  
 “ man will come after me, let him deny him-  
 “ self, and take up his cross and follow me.  
 “ What is a man advantaged, if he gain the  
 “ whole world, and lose his own soul? For  
 “ whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my  
 “ words, of him shall the Son of man be  
 “ ashamed, when he shall come in his own  
 “ glory and in his Father’s, and of the holy an-  
 “ gels.” And he said, “† I tell you of a truth,  
 “ there be some standing here, which shall not  
 “ taste of death, till they see the kingdom of  
 “ God. And it came to pass about eight days  
 “ after these sayings, he took Peter, John and  
 “ James, &c.”

On one side Christ abridged what was most  
 essential in the gospel, and most opposite to  
 nature: and on the other, he raised their hopes  
 by the most noble promises. Moreover he was  
 willing that the miracle, he mentioned, should  
 be the security of the promises, and one  
 of the most powerful motives, to influence  
 his disciples to sacrifice every thing to truth  
 and their duty. This miracle therefore must  
 be great, must have chosen witnesses amongst  
 the disciples, and when they will be allowed  
 to speak of it, it must be accompanied with  
 every

\* Mark viii. 34.

† Luke ix. 27.



every thing that can render it certain, and is CHAP.  
capable of supporting them under the most diffi- IX.  
cult tryals. The history is as follows: “\* It came  
“ to pass about eight days after these sayings,  
“ he took Peter, and John, and James, and  
“ went up into a mountain to pray. And as  
“ he prayed, the fashion of his countenance  
“ was altered, and his raiment was white and  
“ glistering. And behold, there talked with  
“ him two men, which were Moses and  
“ Elias. Who appeared in glory, and spake  
“ of his decease, which he should accomplish  
“ at Jerusalem. But Peter, and they that  
“ were with him, were heavy with sleep:  
“ and when they were awake, they saw his  
“ glory, and the two men that stood with  
“ him. And it came to pass, as they depart-  
“ ed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master,  
“ it is good for us to be here; and let us make  
“ three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for  
“ Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what  
“ he said. While he thus spake, there came a  
“ cloud and overshadowed them: and they fear-  
“ ed as they entered into the cloud.—† And be-  
“ hold, a voice out of the cloud, which said,  
“ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well  
“ pleased; hear ye him.—‡ And suddenly  
“ when they looked round about, they saw  
“ no man any more, save Jesus only with  
“ themselves. And as they came down from  
“ the mountain, he charged them that they  
“ should tell no man what things they had  
“ seen, till the Son of man were risen from  
“ the

N 4

\* Luke ix. 28. † Matth. xvii. 5. ‡ Mark ix. 7, &amp;c

PART " the dead. And they kept that saying with  
 IV. " themselves, questioning one with another  
 " what the rising from the dead should mean.  
 " And they asked him, saying, Why say  
 " the scribes that Elias must first come?  
 " And he answered, Elias verily cometh  
 " first, and restoreth all things, and how it  
 " is written of the Son of man, that he must  
 " suffer many things, and be set at nought.  
 " But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed  
 " come, and they have done unto him what-  
 " soever they listed, as it is written of him.  
 " \* Then the disciples understood, that he  
 " spake unto them of John the Baptist."

## A R T I C L E II.

### *Certainty of the miracle proved by plain and natural reflections.*

I SHALL not make any use of this miracle, till I have proved its certainty by plain and natural reflections taken from the history itself, and such as are likely to make a greater impression upon the mind by their unaffected simplicity.

We have already seen, that something miraculous has been promised; something worthy to be called the kingdom of God in its glorious majesty: we remember the occasion of the promise, and we have not forgot, that it was attended with many real and important things,

\* Mat. xvii. 13.



things, which could not be committed to writing, if they had not been true.

CHAP.  
IX.

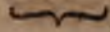
To this I add, that the performance quickly followed the promise, and that at the time it was accomplished, three disciples were chosen to be witnesses of the fact; that these disciples, who seemed to have had some superiority over the others, had the glory to suffer martyrdom, and the honour of its being predicted by Christ. James was the first who bled for him; Peter was crucified; and John, who overcame his martyrdom, was thrown into boiling oil, and then banished to the island Patmos, and only survived the rest to render his testimony, by a longer sufferance, the more illustrious.

Saint Peter in his two epistles speaks of this miracle, as an eye-witness. “\* I have  
“ been (he says in the first) a witness of  
“ the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker  
“ of the glory that shall be revealed.” And in the second epistle, “† We have not (he says)  
“ followed cunningly devised fables, when we  
“ made known unto you the power and com-  
“ ing of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-  
“ witnesses of his majesty. For he received  
“ from God the Father honour and glo-  
“ ry, when there came such a voice to him  
“ from the excellent glory, This is my belo-  
“ ved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. And  
“ this voice, which came from heaven, we  
“ heard, when we were in the holy mount.”

What can we say in contradiction to such a witness, who sealed with his blood what he  
had

\* 1 Pet. v. 1.    † 2 Pet. i. 16.

PART had written, and what he says he had seen.

IV. Tho' he had been the only witness, yet  his testimony would still be of very great weight. But he was supported by the authority of two other martyrs, who were also eye-witnesses of what he had related: and the evangelists join with them in attesting the truth. If we refuse to credit such men, whom shall we believe? and on what history can we depend, if the testimony of three eye-witnesses, who laid down their lives in defence of what they had seen, and whose sincerity is confirmed by the assurances of men prepared like them for martyrdom, be not sufficient to remove our doubts on this head?

But let us admire with what modesty and humility Saint Peter gives his testimony. He has just said that he was a spectator of the glory of Christ, and that he himself heard the voice of his heavenly Father acknowledging him to be his well-beloved Son; and he adds these wonderful words: "We have also a more  
" sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do  
" well that ye take heed, as unto a light that  
" shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn,  
" and the day-star arise in your hearts." He seems to weaken his own testimony by giving the preference to the ancient prophecies, tho' it appeared more natural to prefer an actual accomplishment to a bare prediction, and ocular demonstration to a prophecy. But 'tis upon this account that his testimony becomes more convincing; such a modesty being an unquestionable mark of sincerity, the effect  
of



of an eminent virtue, and a gift of the divine Spirit, who spake by the prophets, and who from age to age increased their authority by the accomplishment of what they foretold, and latterly by the miracles and glory of Christ, of which the apostles were witnesses. CHAP. IX.

A R T I C L E III.

*Farther and more particular proofs of this miracle, which render the truth of it more obvious.*

**I**S there then any occasion for still more particular proofs, that the history of the transfiguration of Christ is not an human invention, and that the evangelists and apostles wrote it only because it was unquestionable? I am ready however to enter into this discussion, for the satisfaction of those who may think it necessary, not without compassionating their imbecillity, at the same time as I throw in a gentle rebuke for their want of belief. Let those persons therefore who are so much afraid of being deceived, and at the same time are so bold as to expose themselves to all the dangers of incredulity; let them, I say, examine with me the circumstances of the recital, which still appear to them questionable, and let them tell me, if it be possible to doubt of the sincerity of men, who confess so many mortifying things of themselves, which they might easily have

PART have suppressed, and which in the main bore  
IV. no relation to the mystery.

— The three apostles chosen out of the rest by a particular privilege, avowed that they slept whilst Christ was at prayer, and that they were not witnesses of his glory, and of the alteration of his countenance and dress, till they awaked; as in another place they confess, that they could not pray one hour with him at the time of his greatest sorrow and agony. Should we have suspected such an heaviness and indifference, if they had not affirmed it? should we have judged that the favourite apostles should, in two such opposite conditions of Christ, be so negligent and stupid? and if this circumstance had been suppressed, in what would the history of the transfiguration have been deficient?

They condemn, and very severely, what Saint Peter said, when he offered to pitch three tents, one for Christ, and the other two for Moses and Elias, by saying, That he knew not what he said; yet without pointing out in what consisted his ignorance and error, which it is not so easy to conjecture as may generally be imagined.

They do not dissemble, that they did not comprehend what Christ said of his future resurrection, when he charged them to tell no man what they had seen, before he was risen from the dead: and yet nothing appeared more plain or simple than this discourse. And we should not imagine that they had then so little know-



knowledge, if they had not taken care to convince us of it by their writings.

CHAP.  
IX.

How could such men, to whom Christ's death and resurrection, tho' clearly revealed, appeared unfathomable mysteries, how could they, I say, think that the conference of Moses and Elias with Christ should have been about his sufferings, and the kind of death he was to die at Jerusalem? Was there any thing in itself more distant from their notions than this mystery? would they have caused Elias to descend from heaven, and raised Moses again from the dead, only to converse upon so afflicting a subject? would they have chosen a day of glory and triumph for a conference apparently contrary to such grandeur and majesty?

The questions, which they proposed to Christ upon the coming of Elias, prove that they never conceived, that this prophet should make so short and secret an apparition. They, as well as all the rest of the Jews, were in expectation of his being employed in a public and lasting ministry. They were astonished, when they saw him disappear so suddenly.

Besides, is it credible, that if they had blended truth with fictions, they would have said nothing more particular of this prophet or Moses? that they would stop where the Holy Spirit stopped them? and that they would have thus refused to satisfy our curiosity in regard to points, on which we are naturally so inquisitive?

Is it natural that they should be so reserved and close, if they were the inventors, and upon a matter

PART. ter where there is so ample a field for the imagination? Is it natural to make no reflections in writing of such serious and magnificent affairs, whose importance and value is known; to be satisfied with a bare recital, and even to abridge that, so as scarce to leave an opportunity for the reader to form a just idea of it, being forced in order to gain an adequate idea, to join together the relation of different evangelists?

But why should they keep the secret till after the resurrection of Christ? What secret was this if nothing happened? and how long was this secret to be kept if there was to be no resurrection? If the fact be true, all this is reasonable; but if it be false, the whole is unintelligible: for the apostles by imagining a false miracle, had no reason to wait for a false resurrection to publish it; it was even their interest to feign that this miracle had been public and notorious from the time it happened; and instead of forging only three witnesses, they should make all the apostles, nay all the disciples, spectators; there being as little trouble to suppose a greater number as three, and the story deriving greater credit from the multitude of witnesses.

## ARTICLE



ARTICLE IV.

*The mystery of the transfiguration not only was, but must have been, true and real. Necessary relation of all the circumstances of this mystery with the designs of God.*

Henceforward, methinks, we ought to glorify God, and to confess, that the mystery of the transfiguration is not only certain, but that external testimonies most worthy of respect, and the most conclusive internal proofs, equally concur to establish the truth thereof. But there is still another kind of proofs upon which I have great dependance, and which consist in shewing that the mystery of the transfiguration not only was, but must have been, true and real, and that in the designs of God, all the circumstances related by the evangelists were necessary.

We have seen in the first part of this work, that the Messiah was the great object of the writings of the old testament; that he was the end of the law, and of all the prophecies. The law cannot be more worthily represented than by Moses who was its minister, and who may in one sense be looked upon as its legislator. The prophets, who appeared still living in the person of Elias, could not have a better interpreter than him, nor could they on their part send a more faithful deputy to the Messiah.

The

U O P M

PART The time of the law and of its figures is passed:

IV. and Moses is also dead. But many prophecies are not as yet fulfilled, and Elias is still living. It is just that the law should bear witness of the Messiah, and come out of the tomb to give its testimony: hence Moses is called from the dead. The prophets also must come to declare to the Messiah, that they were employed only in his mysteries, either accomplished, or future; and 'tis for this reason that Elias came in the name of them all, as a witness of what passed, and a depositary of futurity.

The greatest and most incomprehensible mystery of all, is that of the sufferings and death of the Messiah. 'Tis this mystery which is to blind the Jews, and to conceal from them their promised deliverer, whom they expected. But Moses and the prophets discoursed with the Messiah of nothing else but this mystery, because on this their salvation and righteousness depended, and they had it always in view. They knew all its circumstances; they eagerly desired to reap the fruits of it, and, if possible, to be witnesses to it: they now speak of it with infinite acknowledgment to him, who was to wash them with his blood, and to make them pass from the old covenant to the new; and they look upon it as a peculiar grace to enjoy the same privilege with Abraham, nay a much greater than him, by beholding the day of the Son of man.

They appeared with him in glory and in a state of majesty, because they boasted only in the  
the



the ignominy of his cross, and set a greater value upon his mortifications and disgraces, than on all the treasures of Egypt and of the kings of Israel. And they were not astonished to behold the Messiah more splendid than the sun, though he was destined to the greatest ignominies, because they knew that 'tis from the very bosom of humiliation and disgrace, that he should derive his glory, and that he was powerful enough to heighten his triumph by every thing which contributed to his disgrace.

Whilst Moses and Elias, representing the old testament, were occupied in adoration and thanksgiving before the Messiah, the three apostles, who represent the gospel and the new covenant, and who by their number pointed out the privilege of this covenant over the old, were oppressed with sleep, without knowing or minding what passed in their presence, having then eyes and seeing not, and being as yet ignorant both of their dignity and privilege.

But the light of Christ's countenance, and the conference of Moses and Elias, awake them. They are struck with the greatness of the irradiation. They distinctly hear from Moses and Elias what they had not yet learnt either from the law or the prophets: and though the mystery of the sufferings and death of Christ was as yet concealed from them, they could not however be ignorant, that it was concerning this mystery that Moses and Elias conversed with Christ.

PART They knew by some part of the discourse that

IV. these two great men were going to withdraw.  
 And Peter then demands their stay, and offers to make tents to detain them, like that which he designed for Christ. But the Holy Ghost informs us that he knew not what he said, \* by pretending to put the law and the prophets in competition with him, who is their end and term: by desiring to detain the law which was to disappear, and the prophecies, which were to cease, and to give them the same continuance as to him, who has neither beginning nor end; by endeavouring to join the old law with the new, and the synagogue with the christian church; and by not understanding the infinite distance between those who are but ministers and servants, and the only Son of God; between all the creatures, how eminently soever they appear, and him who created them from nothing, and who can annihilate them by withdrawing his continual support.

At the time Peter was still speaking, a cloud covered the servants, whom this apostle confounded with their master, in order to shew that every thing ought to disappear and hide itself before Christ: and a remarkable voice came out of the cloud, and pronounced these words: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him." This voice could not be ambiguous betwixt Christ and his servants: but lest it should leave any doubt in the minds of the apostles, the two servants were already withdrawn, and the two apostles who

\* "For he wist not what to say." Mark ix. 5.

"Not knowing what he said," Luke ix. 33.



who \* at the very instant looked on every side, CHAP.  
saw Christ alone. And the Holy Ghost tells IX.  
us this in express terms, " When the voice was  
" past, Jesus was found alone.

And is it possible, not to distinguish by so many marks, and principally by the last testimony, him who is the center and end of all : who is figured by the law, foretold by the prophets, and plainly announced by the gospel ; who is the founder of both covenants, and the link which unites them ; who is the only Son of the Father of the family, sent after the servants that preceded him, and who came to demand the fruits of the vineyard, which he had entrusted to husbandmen that assumed the property of it to themselves ; and who having spoke to men from the beginning of the world only by his ambassadors and interpreters, came himself to declare to them the will of his Father, without mystery or mediator.

## A R T I C L E V.

*Explication of some other circumstances.*

*Importance of these words, Hear him.*

**H**EAR him, said the heavenly Father to the apostles, and in their persons to all mankind. This expression comprehends the  
O 2 whole.

\* " Suddenly when they had looked round about, they saw  
" no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves." Mark  
ix. 8. " When the voice was past, Jesus was found alone."  
Luke ix. 35.

PART whole. After Christ all curiosity is superfluous ;

IV. after having heard him, all questions are at an end. What he has said suffices ; what he has not said is useless : it is necessary to hear him and to submit, to believe and obey him. One might say with the Samaritan before he came, † “ The Messiah cometh and he will tell us “ all things.” But after his coming 'tis a crime to reply or even to doubt, 'tis a crime to add to or diminish his words, 'tis a crime to alter or weaken them by human interpretations. He ascended to heaven after he had conversed with us ; no one else will descend from thence to give us another gospel ; and after having heard him, we have only to wait for the last day, in which he will come to call us to an account for his words.

Let those, who are still doubtful in the midst of the resplendent lights which the gospel diffuses on every side, let them, I say, understand in fine, what misery, what condemnation they draw upon themselves, by refusing to hearken to the incarnate Wisdom, and to the true Son of the Father, descended from heaven to speak to us upon earth, and who assumed our speech and language, to instruct us, rather as his friends and brethren than as his servants.

Before the resurrection of Christ the glory of the gospel was as yet secret and veiled : his humbling mysteries concealed its grandeur ; and it would have been producing and revealing it at an unseasonable time, to publish it before his death. But the day on which Christ bursted forth

† John iv. 25.



forth from the tomb, the gospel disengaged it-  
self also from darkness and obscurity, and the  
synagogue was buried in it: all the figures and  
shades were lost in the night, and the truth ap-  
peared bright as the sun. The gloomy and dark  
coverings which had concealed the essential  
glory of Christ, assumed a purer and more  
dazling whiteness than that of snow: and the  
apostles, who had appeared hitherto as sleepy  
witnesses, rather than as witnesses worthy of the  
gospel, broke forth from their sleep of incre-  
dulity, and from the lethargy of fear, publish-  
ing alike both the glory and humiliations of  
their master, of which they had been alike  
spectators.

For 'tis a point worthy of observation,  
that the very apostles, who were chosen to  
be witnesses of the transfiguration and of the  
greatest glory of Christ, were likewise wit-  
nesses \* of his agony in the garden, and of  
his greatest weakness; that they were asleep  
during the prayer of Christ, which preceded  
his glory, and during that which went be-  
fore his ignominy; that then they understood  
nothing of these different mysteries; and that  
it was the light of the resurrection of Christ  
which rendered them intelligible, and removed  
the seeming opposition, which was between  
two extremities, so distant according to reason  
and the senses, and so particularly united in  
the designs of God over his Son and us.

After these admirable relations, I know not  
whether it be still necessary to take notice of

PART what they add to the other proofs of the truth

IV. of Christ's transfiguration; methinks it would  
be doing an injury to impartial readers, to suspect their not being greatly affected with them. I am therefore content to tell them, that if this mystery be certain, as they are constrained to acknowledge, they have nothing further to seek, and that from this time forward they have only to hear Christ in the gospel, and to substitute obedience in the place of cavil and curiosity.



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A  
T R E A T I S E  
Of the PRINCIPLES of the  
C H R I S T I A N R E L I G I O N.

---

P A R T V.

*Proofs of the principles of the christian religion, by the conversion of the world, and by establishing the doctrine, morals, and mysteries of the church of Christ.*

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C H A P. I.

*Christ's design to enlighten and convert the whole world. The means he chose to execute this design. An abridgment of the general plan of this fifth part. Christ comes forth from the obscurity of his retreat, to execute the greatest and most surprizing enterprize that ever entered the mind of man. Christ from the beginning of his manifestation form'd his scheme so extensively, that success could add nothing to it. Instead of using such means as were*

PART  
V.

*agreeable to human wisdom, and in his power, he slighted them, and even chose the contrary. One would think that his submitting to be baptized by Saint John, must prove an invincible obstacle to his design, yet he submitted to it. His surprizing choice of apostles, who were poor fishermen of Galilee. No connection with the great men or sages of his nation. His chusing to be followed only by poor people. His refusal not only of the royalty offered him by the people, but also of being concerned in any temporal affair. The priests and pharisees, whose credit was very great, reproved by him publicly with great freedom. Christ knew and foretold the time of his death, which caused no alteration in his measures, neither did he strive to avoid it. Christ made use of no human means to engage his disciples, having foretold nothing to them but persecutions and death.*

## ARTICLE I.

*An abridgment of the general plan of this fifth part.*

THE proofs produced in the preceding parts of this treatise are more than sufficient, methinks, to convince us that Christ is the Messiah promised in the holy scriptures; and that the christian religion, of which he is the author, is the only one approved by God, and wherein salvation is certain. Hitherto we have



have dwelt more on the prophecies which fore-CHAP.  
told his coming, and the miracles which con- I.  
firmed his divine mission, than on his design to  
enlighten and convert the whole world, on his  
doctrine, morals, mysteries, and his great  
work, the church. For it is the interest of  
religion in general, and consequently ours, to  
consider him in every point of view, in order  
to reunite the lights we receive from so many  
different quarters, which finding us already  
convinced and submissive, will add a spiritual  
joy and consolation to the inward impression  
of the evidence.

It would be unjust to bereave Christ, even  
in thought, of those proofs by which we were  
convinced that he is the Messiah and the Son  
of God : yet we may suspend our attention to  
them for a while, and letting the impression  
and sentiment arising from those proofs con-  
tinue in the bottom of our hearts, let us for-  
get them for a few moments, in order to con-  
sider him by other proofs of a quite different  
nature.

Let us therefore treasure up for the present  
what we have hitherto discovered, and turn our  
thoughts towards Christ coming forth from the  
obscurity of his retreat, to execute the greatest  
and most surprizing design which ever entered  
into the mind of man.

## ARTICLE II.

*Christ quits the obscurity of his retreat,  
to execute the greatest and most sur-  
prizing design which ever entered the  
mind of man.*

CHRIST intends to reform the people of Israel, by teaching them the internal and spiritual worship of God, and undeceiving them in respect to the extreme confidence they had in offering sacrifices, and other rites enjoined by the Jewish law; and to wean their minds from the love of temporal benefits, which the law promised them, and to explain to them a notion of justice very different from that with which they had been hitherto contented.

But he did not confine himself to the tribes of Israel; he desired also the conversion of the Gentiles, to raise them out of the darkness into which they were immersed; to destroy their idols and temples; to banish from the world the usurper, that claimed the adoration of the living and true God; to detect the folly and false wisdom of philosophers; to convert infidel princes to the faith; transforming sensual and worldly men into pious and virtuous believers, and reuniting all the people of the earth under one law, which was to be common both to Jews and Gentiles, and contrary in every thing to the passions of both.

To



To this great design he added another, seemingly much more difficult; for he was desirous to convince mankind, whether Jews or infidels, that they are all criminals, separated from God by an irrevocable decree, condemned to eternal death, without the interposition of a mediator to reconcile them. He endeavours to make all men own him for their redeemer, to expect no salvation but through him, and to place their hopes only in his merits. And he affirms, that it will be as easy for him to bring all mankind under his subjection, and make them own him as their mediator, as to call them to the worship and belief of the true God.

But what example did he propose to imitate, or what model had he to follow? Did any one before him ever form such a project? I wave every thing which personally belongs to him, and to his dignity as a mediator. Did ever any prophet propose to convert the Gentiles? What objections did not Jonas form against going to Niniveh, and how greatly was the fruit of his preaching confined to time and place? Did the pagan sages, who believed in one God, dare to publish their opinion? did they venture to say, that they did not give into the same errors as the people? did not one particular person, after having too freely declared his opinion, deny in public what he secretly believed. Does not Plato's apology for him, tho' a false one, acknowledge his weakness? and does not the apology of Xenophon, which is more sincere, own that

PART that Socrates was an adorer of the same gods  
V. as the Athenians.

How could a single man undertake such an affair? what disproportion between so vast a design and the means employed? did he truly know in what he engaged? was he certainly acquainted with the disposition of the Jews and Gentiles? were the former easily convinced, and were the others even capable of instruction, being ignorant of God, the Messiah, the scriptures, and the prophets?

### ARTICLE III.

*Christ from the beginning of his manifestation formed his scheme so extensively, that success could add nothing to it.*

Perhaps Christ did not at first propose so extensive and difficult an undertaking; perhaps he was enticed by his first success to attempt something more; perhaps that not having fixed a certain plan at first, he occasionally introduced things not designed from the beginning.

This I endeavour to discover, and I find the contrary. For from the beginning of his public ministry he told his first disciples, that he chose them to be \* fishers of men. He permitted Nathanael to acknowledge him as king

\* "I will make you fishers of men." Matth. iv 19.



king † of Israel, and Son of God. He de-CHAP.  
clared to a Jewish senator, celebrated among I.  
the pharisees, that he ‡ “descended from hea-  
“ ven to save the world; and that whosoever  
“ did not believe in him was already con-  
“ demned, because he did not believe in the  
“ only Son of God.” He told the Samaritan  
positively, \* that he was the Messiah, and that  
from that time the worship of God was no lon-  
ger || fixed at Jerusalem, which signified that the  
ancient sacerdotal power and the law was abro-  
gated. Having opened the book of Isaiah in  
the synagogue of Nazareth, and lighting on  
this prophecy, which is the most clear in re-  
lation to the Messiah: “The Spirit of the  
“ Lord descended on me: he hath consecrated  
“ me by his unction; and hath sent me to  
“ preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent  
“ me to heal the broken-hearted, and to de-  
“ nounce deliverance to the captives:” he  
clearly proved, that this prophecy meant him,  
§ who was come to fulfil it. All this was in  
the first year of his ministry, and before the  
second passover. And it is manifest, that the  
designs of Christ, from the instant of quitting  
his retreat, were as extensive as at the end of his  
ministry; and that he desired from that time,  
to

† “Thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel.”  
John i. 49.

‡ John iii. 13, 17, 18.

\* “I that speak unto thee am he.” John iv. 26.

|| “The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this moun-  
tain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” John iv. 21.

§ “This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Luke  
iv. 21.

PART to be acknowledged as the Messiah, the only  
V. Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.

#### A R T I C L E IV.

*Instead of using such means as were agreeable to human wisdom, and in his power, he slighted them, and even chose the contrary.*

**Y**ET since this was Christ's design, why did he conceal himself so long in the house of a mean mechanic in a little town of Galilee? why did he spend so many years, of such value to the world, in silence and obscurity, contrary to his great designs? From the twelfth year of his age, he gave great hopes of what he should be afterwards capable of doing. He astonished the wisest and most knowing of his nation by his questions and replies. Being well known to the priests and doctors, why did he not make the proper use of the credit and reputation he had acquired? He would have gained the admiration and esteem of the world by two or three such incidents. All obstructions would have been afterwards easily removed. And it is astonishing, that contrary to all the rules of human prudence, he neglected to pursue the same method which he at first made choice of, and which had proved so wonderfully successful.

I can-



I cannot imagine, what could induce Christ CHAP. I.  
to suffer himself to be thought the son of \* Joseph, even to the thirtieth year of his age; and why did he confirm that opinion by his obedience to him, and the dutiful regard he always shewed him? Could he afterwards easily persuade mankind that he had no other Father but God, and that he was born of a virgin, as the prophets foretold of the Messiah? Methinks he defers too long the discovery of a truth so opposite to common prejudices, a truth which the conduct of Christ to Joseph seems to have rendered doubtful by the excess of his humility.

But I find the affair still more intricate by his persisting to live at † Nazareth, where he was not born; Bethlehem being the place of his nativity, and in which the prophets foretold the Messiah must be born. Did he not think, that it would have been an obstacle to his scheme, that there should be the least reason to doubt of his origin. ‡ Ought he not to have prevented the reproach of usurping the title of the Messiah, since he was no citizen of Bethlehem, like David and his promised son? And does he not seem to have been ignorant of the indifference and iniquity of mankind,

to

\* "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren and sisters, are they not all with us?"  
"And they were offended in him." Matth. xiii. 55.

† "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" John i. 46.

‡ "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, that Christ cometh out of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" John vii. 41.

PART. to expect that they would search the public registers † to enquire whether Mary, when she came with Joseph to be enrolled, was delivered of a Son during her stay in that town. For my part, I think their care should not have been relied upon, and that Mary should have dwelt a long time at Bethlehem to render the birth of our Saviour in that place certain and public.

It appears to me very reasonable, that Christ should have studied the scriptures, not for his own instruction, being acquainted with them in a more sublime manner, but to stop the mouths of his enemies, and to have greater authority among the people: for it is natural to judge, that a man never initiated in learning, must be entirely ignorant\*, or that he will not be esteemed equal to those who are worn out by study, and whom the people have always revered as their masters. It would have been prudent, methinks, to have given no handle to an accusation capable of making a wrong impression on those, who do not sufficiently examine the truth, and who often are incapable of doing it, and generally form their judgment from outward appearance. But I find, that human wisdom is not here consulted.

† "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."  
John vii. 52.

\* "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned."  
John vii. 15.



ARTICLE V.

*One would think, that his submitting to be baptized by Saint John, must prove an invincible obstacle to his design, yet he submitted to it.*

**I**T seems, that a more than human wisdom was consulted in a more essential point. For I see, with much surprize, that Christ submitted to the baptism of Saint John, which was only designed for finners, and to prepare them for the reception of the Messiah. Is not this darkening and confounding every thing, to intermix with a croud of penitent finners? how could he expect to persuade them he was the Messiah, after joining the throng that expected his coming, and who purified themselves in order to become ready to receive him? And was it not seemingly losing sight of, and obstructing his design, to conceal his innocence, his dignity and divine mission, at a time when it was necessary to let the world know them, when he was entering upon the exercise of the greatest and most divine ministry that ever was?

ARTICLE VI.

*His surprizing choice of apostles, who were poor fishermen of Galilee. No connection with the great men or sages of his nation. His chusing to be followed by poor people.*

MY surprize increases, when I see where Christ looks out for disciples, and from whence he brings those, whom he proposes to elevate to the highest rank. Who could have imagined, that he would overlook all the greatest, wisest, and brightest men of Israel, to make choice of illiterate men of no birth, education, or fortune; men unimproved by experience or converse, men of no substance, art or address, who were seemingly unqualified for any other state but that of fishermen, in which they had already spent the greatest part of their lives? Did this shew a want of assistance, to chuse such fellow-labourers and ministers? and does not he seem to expect no success, by employing such means to gain his point?

Besides, after having chosen such incompetent instruments, I should have thought that he would have endeavoured to supply their natural inability by seeking the protection of men in power, by \* courting those, who, by their

\* "Have any of the rulers or pharisees believed on him?"  
"But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed."  
John vii. 49.



their learning and virtue, had acquired a reputation; those, in a word, whose authority was able to promote or suppress his doctrine. But I can find no such method used. None but poor mean people followed Christ, and he seems to have encouraged none but such to accompany him. What could he expect from a multitude so incapable of imposing, so despised by the great and learned of the nation, and so likely to bring contempt on the part they espoused?

A R T I C L E VII.

*His refusal not only of the royalty offered by the people, but also being concerned in any temporal affair.*

TRUE it is, that ignorant people, tho' of little weight in religious affairs, may yet greatly contribute to the establishment of true or false opinions, by declaring for a chief, or by taking up arms to support him. But Christ, whom the people desired to proclaim king, and who by birth-right had an incontestable title to the throne, concealed himself, and declined the favour of the people, making no advantage of their forwardness and zeal, which if he had the least encouraged, would have carried things to a great height.

He even was so extremely cautious upon this matter, that he would not concern him-

PART self in any affair, negotiation or quarrel. Info-

V. much that two brothers contending about their  
 patrimony, and one of them entreating Christ  
 to decide the case; he refused to be concerned  
 in their difference, asking him \* by what au-  
 thority he pretends to make him judge in this  
 sort of disputes? Such a delicacy does not give  
 a man an opportunity of becoming very im-  
 portant; for it is very difficult to carry on any  
 great design without being concerned in tem-  
 poral affairs.

## A R T I C L E VIII.

*The priests and pharisees, whose credit  
 was very great, reproved by him  
 publicly with great freedom.*

BUT there is still something more extraordi-  
 nary. Christ who was unwilling to give any  
 umbrage to the secular power, and who, on all  
 occasions, manifested his humility and meek-  
 ness, incurred nevertheless the hatred of the  
 pharisees, sadducees, doctors of law, and in  
 short of all those that were in power, by the  
 manner he publicly reproved their hypocrisy,  
 pride, avarice, superstition, ignorance and  
 blindness. I do not question but they truly  
 merited his reproaches, and that it was proper  
 to unmask their hypocrisy; but was that the  
 time? should not he defer it till his authority  
 was

\* "Who made me a judge or divider over you?"  
 Luke xii. 14.



was more established? did not he hazard all CHAP.  
by attracting the hatred of such dangerous I.  
enemies? how could he guard himself against  
their envy and malice? if he had happened to  
miscarry, what would have become of his great  
design? He must be very certain, that he want-  
ed no human assistance, since he feared no-  
thing; and that he could conduct every thing  
by his own power, when he despised all ob-  
stacles, and did not endeavour to guard against  
them.

#### A R T I C L E IX.

*Christ foretold his approaching death,  
which caused no alteration in his mea-  
sures, neither did he strive to avoid it.*

**B**ESIDES the implacable hatred of the  
pharisees and priests, Herod's jealousy  
was apparent, insomuch that Christ was not  
safe in Galilee. This he was well assured of;  
\* yet it gave him no uneasiness, and he an-  
swered that he was not to die in Galilee; ne-  
vertheless he declared at the same time, that  
his death was near at hand, and compared the  
residue of his life to a respite only of three  
days.

P 3

He

\* "There came certain of the pharisees, saying unto him,  
"Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.  
"And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold I  
"cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and  
"the third day I shall be perfected." Luke xiii. 31.

**PART** He foresaw it from the beginning, and declared it. For on the first passover of his predication, having driven out of the temple such as profaned it by sordid traffic, he answered those who took offence at his zeal, and demanded some proof of the power he assumed, in terms not easily understood by others, but very clear as to himself, † that the temple of his body would be soon pulled down, but that it would be rebuilt three days after his resurrection. He also pointed out from the beginning, what manner of death he should die, by comparing himself to the brazen serpent which Moses ‡ elevated on a pole in the wilderness, saying, it was necessary he should be so exalted for the salvation of those who believed in him, and to procure for them eternal life. And from that time he never ceased foretelling his death, and the circumstances attending it, which were always present to his mind, and he even counted the hours and moments.

I cannot reconcile this distinct knowledge with his conduct on other occasions: for in the first place I cannot comprehend why his life should be of so short a duration; and having designed to convert all mankind, why he confined himself to Judea alone, where he gathered

† “Jesus answered, and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.—He spake of the temple of his body.” John ii. 19, 21.

‡ “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John iii. 14, 15.



gathered little fruit, which he himself complained of; and why he employed himself in cultivating an ungrateful vine, when he could have reaped, as he said himself, so plentiful a harvest among the Gentiles.

In the second place, I cannot comprehend, that designing to convert all mankind by his apostles, why he contented himself with sending them two by two to the towns, where he himself was to preach, instead of making useful trials of their abilities in his life-time, when he might be a witness himself, and see what success or obstacles his great designs would meet with; the execution of which would, without comparison, be much more difficult after his death.

In the third place, I cannot imagine, why he forbid the apostles \* preaching to the Samaritans, by whom he was so well received, and where the conversion of one woman only and a stay of three days gained him so many disciples: and why he hindered them from going into the territories of the Tyrians and Sidonians so near Galilee, and where he declares, that there was a greater disposition to faith and repentance, than among the Jews? Ought so clear-sighted and prudent a person to have neglected such happy preparations, or obstructed them by his prohibitions? Certainly he must be more than man to act in such a man-

P 4

ner,

\* "They besought him, that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word." John iv. 40, 41.

PARTNER, and the success of his undertaking must  
V. wholly depend on himself.

Were not this the case, I do not see, why he should leave his apostles without that light and power which he promised them \*, and why he deferred, till after his death, to communicate that perfection to them, which in prudence they ought to have sooner enjoyed. For he foretold, that his death would be a great scandal to his disciples, that he would at that time be abandoned, and that the flock would be dispersed, as soon as the shepherd was smitten. Why does he then defer to strengthen and render them intrepid? Whence shall the dispersed sheep gain courage when their shepherd is no more? Will it be then time to rally and fill them with a resolution, which the presence of their shepherd could not inspire? The shepherd must therefore have been certain of his resurrection, and certain moreover that the fruit of his death and resurrection would answer his expectation. Otherwise his whole conduct was irregular, contrary to all prudential rules, and directly opposite to his designs.

\* "The hour cometh that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own home, and shall leave me alone.

"All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. Matth. xxvi. 31.



A R T I C L E X.

*Christ made use of no human means  
to engage his disciples, and foretold  
to them only persecutions and death.*

**T**IS renouncing, methinks, all capable means of attracting mankind, to promise nothing for this life, and to foretell them nothing but persecutions and sufferings: and yet this is what Christ does in regard to his disciples. He not only bestowed nothing on them, but obliged them to quit the little they had. In speaking of himself, he told them, he had no place of rest, and that in this respect he was more destitute of every thing than the foxes, who had their burrows; and than the birds, who had their nests; by which he deprives them of all hopes of a comfortable settlement in this life.

He told them they would be treated as himself, contradicted, persecuted, and despised by the world, and that it would be looked upon as an agreeable service to God to put them to death. After this I am not at all surprized, that his disciples abandoned him on so decisive an occasion: on the contrary I am astonished, they were so disinterested, and had the courage to follow him so long. I still wonder much more that Christ, who knew the general imbecillity of mankind, the motives by which they are actuated, the inclinations which deter-

PART determine them, never encouraged them by  
V. any temporal advantages so often promised in  
the law, and which seemed so necessary to  
confirm them in that virtue which was then  
weak and wavering.

Yet after having join'd this to the preceding  
reflections, and summed up all the obstacles,  
which Christ seems to have raised against the  
design he formed; and after seriously consider-  
ing his endeavouring to reject all the means,  
which according to the light of reason were  
capable of giving him success; I cannot but own,  
I see him invested with a wisdom of a different  
kind than what is human, and with a power  
which has need of no assistance; a power, that  
even converts the very obstacles to an ad-  
vantage, and shews that he wanted neither the  
assistance or counsel of any creature.



CHAP. II.

CHAP.  
II.

*Christ was sure of the success of his gospel. He foretold that in a little time it would be propagated to the farthest extremity of the earth. He foretold that his death, instead of being an obstacle to this progress, would promote it; and that the conversion of the Gentiles would be the fruit of it, whilst the Jews, who were witnesses of his miracles, would remain unbelievers. He did not foretell those things merely as a prophet, but as one who was to perform them himself. He foretold the courage of the apostles, which proved true. He foretold that they should have upon all occasions a wisdom superior to that of their enemies, and that it was he who would give it them.*

ARTICLE I.

*Christ was sure of success, and foretold that from a small beginning, the gospel would soon be propagated to the farthest extremity of the earth.*

**W**HAT confirms me in this opinion is, that Christ was sure of success from the very beginning, and even when all appearances were against him. For he compared the preaching of the gospel, in its weakest beginnings, to a little leaven which insensibly spreads

PART spreads through all the dough, and changes its  
V. nature by communicating its own qualities.

He compared \* it also to a grain of mustard-seed, which is the least of all seeds, but of a most penetrating sharpness, and after it is sown surpasses in height all other pulse.

He compared it also to good grain, sown by a husbandman in his field, and which comes to perfection, tho' his enemy maliciously sowed tares in it by night. And in his explaining this comparison, he said that † he was the husbandman, that the world was his field, and the elect the good seed: signifying in few words, that the world was his, and that the gospel should be preached by his order without distinction of persons, and that the malice of the devil, joined with the resistance of the world, of which he was prince, should not hinder the salvation of many in all nations, whom he pleased to chuse.

## ARTICLE II.

*Christ foretold that his death, instead of being an obstacle to the progress of the gospel, would promote it.*

Nothing seemed more opposite to so great a design than his death, which seemed to interrupt the execution of it, leaving imperfect

\* Math. xiii. 32, 33.

† "He that soweth the good seed, is the son of man: the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom." Math. xiii. 37, 38.



fect what was begun, and causing all hopes of future success to vanish. But he thought quite otherwise, for the whole success depended on his death. He said to his disciples, \* “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Thus he signifies his own death and burial, and the incredible plenty of fruit that would follow, particularly among the Gentiles: for it is very remarkable, that this speech is made on their account, and it is of consequence that this should be well known. CHAP. II.

### A R T I C L E III.

*Christ foretold that the conversion of the Gentiles would be the fruit of his death.*

**I**T was very common to see Gentiles come to Jerusalem to adore the God of the Jews on all their great festivals, particularly on their passover, whether they adored no other gods, or whether they thought the worshipping of him was compatible with that of other deities, of whose falseness they were not as yet convinced. Some of those Gentiles, touched with respect towards Christ, desired to see him, and applying to Philip the apostle, who, together with Andrew, came to acquaint Jesus, perhaps with astonishment, that the Gentiles desired to see him,

\* John xii. 24.

PART him, and probably with a secret confidence,  
 V. that those small beginnings would prove the  
 fore-runner of a very considerable progress.

“ Jesus answered them, The hour is come  
 “ that the Son of man should be glorified.  
 “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a  
 “ a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and  
 “ die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bring-  
 “ eth forth much fruit.” As if he had said  
 in the clearest terms: My glory will soon be  
 great among the Gentiles, but their faith de-  
 pends on my death. I am like the grain of  
 wheat, which never multiplies till put into the  
 earth, and beareth not till it dies: I shall not  
 appear great among the nations, till I am put  
 to death by my own people, and my fecundity,  
 typified by that of Isaac, is annexed to my sa-  
 crifice.

On the same occasion Christ said, † “ Now  
 “ is the judgment of this world; now shall the  
 “ prince of this world be cast out. And I, if  
 “ I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all  
 “ men unto me. This he said, signifying  
 “ what death he should die.” How could  
 Christ but see the whole consequence of his de-  
 sign from the beginning, since he made its exe-  
 cution and accomplishment depend on what  
 must have been its greatest obstruction accord-  
 ing to human prudence. He said, They are  
 preparing to put me to a scandalous and cruel  
 death on a cross; but it is by that I propose to  
 conquer the world, and triumph over him who  
 hath caused himself to be adored for so many  
 ages.

† John xii. 31.



ages. I will stretch forth my hands to the ex-CHAP.  
tremity of the earth, and will draw all people II.  
unto me: I will make all the world to kneel  
before my cross: I will convert it into an altar  
of expiation and grace, into a throne of mercy,  
and into a trophy, where my enemies and their  
arms shall be nailed and suspended in the sight  
of the whole universe.

#### ARTICLE IV.

*He foretold that the Jews, who were  
witnesses of his miracles, and depo-  
sitaries of the holy scriptures, would be  
excluded his kingdom, and the Gen-  
tiles preferred before them.*

UPON several other occasions Christ  
‡ foretold that the Gentiles would be-  
lieve in him, and would come from the East,  
West,

‡ “ And I say unto you, that many shall come from the  
“ east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac,  
“ and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of  
“ the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall  
“ be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matth. viii. 11, 12.

“ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye  
“ shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the pro-  
“ phets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.  
“ And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and  
“ from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the  
“ kingdom of God. And behold, there are last, which shall  
“ be first, and there are first, which shall be last.” Luke xiii.  
28.

What is related by Saint Matthew, was in regard of the cen-  
tury's faith; and what is said by Saint Luke, was in respect to  
the question proposed to Christ upon the small number of elect.  
Matth. xxii. 2, 7.

PART. West, North, and South, and sit down with  
V. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets,  
whose faith they imitated, while the children,  
for whom the kingdom was prepared (intimating the Jews) should be excluded and condemned to darkness and eternal weeping. Such a prophecy did not seem probable at that time; for if the Jews did not believe, they who had all the proofs necessary to convince them, they who expected the Messiah, and did not doubt but that the prophets, who predicted his coming, were inspired, and who knew that the time was accomplished or very near it; what likelihood was there that infidels, who knew nothing of the prophecies relating to the Messiah, would believe in him without having heard his discourses or beheld his miracles; or that they should even know that his own people had rejected him?

And yet this double prodigy was often foretold by Christ in different parables, which were so clear, that the event was no way necessary to explain them. In one of the parables, he compares the Jews to the men invited by their king to the festival of his son's nuptials, who refused to be present, and maltreated those who were sent to invite them: and he compares the Gentiles to strangers and blind people, such as were never thought of before, who are substituted in the room of the others to fill their vacant places.

In another, he represents the Jews, and particularly their chiefs and those in power, as the ungrateful and unjust vine-dressers, unto whom



whom the master entrusted the care of his vineyard, but who constantly refused to deliver him the fruit ; \* who even abused the servants whom he sent to demand the same, and seeing their master's son coming upon the same errand, plotted to murder him, which they actually effected after they had cast him out of the vineyard. He represents the Gentiles as faithful and grateful vine-dressers, whom the master, justly provoked by the murder of his only son, substituted in the place of those murderers, and gave them the charge of his vineyard. CHAP. II.

In another parable, Christ compares himself to a nobleman, who went into a far country to take possession of a kingdom †, and on his journey received a deputation from his ancient subjects, that they would have him no longer to reign over them. But on his return, he punished the rebels with death. These rebels are certainly the Jews. The new kingdom in a far country, plainly imports the conquests of the Gentiles. And the punishment of the rebels is an evident prediction of that of the Jews, of which Christ speaks as already done, in as much as he is certain that what he decrees shall be fulfilled.

\* Matth. xxi. 33, 40.

† Luke xix. 12, 27.

## ARTICLE V.

*Christ did not foretell those things merely as a prophet, but as one who was to perform them himself.*

FOR he did not foretell this punishment in the manner the prophets did, merely as a thing that would come to pass, or as a punishment which God would inflict on the Jews; but as a vengeance he himself would take on his rebellious subjects as their lawful king, and which should be executed by his orders, and in his presence. “As for mine enemies, (for it is thus he explains himself) † which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”

He makes use of an expression equally pompous and terrible, in the parable of the guests at the solemnizing the marriage of the king's son, that is to say, those who were invited to believe in him, and to participate the joyful mystery of his incarnation: for after saying, some of the guests excused themselves, and others seized on the king's servants, treated them spitefully, and even deprived them of life; he pronounced those marvellous words, “\* When the king heard thereof he was exceeding wroth, and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city.” Jerusalem heard these words with-

† Luke xix. 27.

\* Matth. xxij. 7.



without fear of the consequence. The armies, CHAP  
which were to burn their city, appeared ei- II.  
ther chimerical, or far distant: and they did  
not believe that Christ had them ready to obey  
his commands. But the prediction was thereby  
more marvellous; and the consequence which  
verified it in every part, shews that Christ was  
the only Son of God, and the King whose  
clemency the Jews slighted, and whose seve-  
rity they felt.

But it is not as yet the time to compare these  
predictions with their accomplishment: never-  
theless two things are sufficient to be here con-  
sidered; the one, that they could not be more  
clear or expressive in respect to the conversion of  
the Gentiles, and their preference to the Jews:  
the other, that they were prophecies which  
Christ himself was to fulfil; and that they  
equally discovered the plan of his work, and  
his supreme power to put it in execution.

## ARTICLE VI.

*Christ foretold the courage and steadiness  
of his apostles, and answered for it,  
as being himself the source and prin-  
ciple thereof.*

THERE are others no less astonishing,  
but of a different kind, which have not-  
withstanding an essential connection with his  
design of converting the world.

PART V. It was necessary for this purpose to have men of intrepidity, whom no torments could subdue, and whom even death could not intimidate. But where to find such men? how can he be assured of their courage? and how could he establish a structure of so great weight upon so doubtful and unsteady a foundation? Christ foretold their resolution and courage, and answered for it.

“ I send you forth (says he) † as sheep in the midst of wolves. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops. ‡ But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness. \* In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. || I shall send the promise of my Father upon you, and ye shall be endued with power from on high. You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost, which will descend on you, and ye shall bear me witness in Jerusalem, and all parts of Judea, Samaria, and even to the extremity of the earth.” § Christ did not conceal from them what they were to suffer; he assures them that they will be put to death, and torn in pieces by the wolves as  
fo

† Matth. x. 16. and verse 28, 27.  
\* John xvi. 33.

|| Luke xxiv. 29.

† John xv. 26.  
§ Acts i. 8.



to many sheep. But he promised them an invincible strength, a celestial power, a victory, such as he himself had gained over the world, and over every thing which could oppose the gospel : and he affirms, that they will publish it with incredible success, not only in Judea and all the neighbouring provinces, but also in the farthest parts of the earth ; and that they will have ocular demonstration of its success before their death. This not only implies a courage and resolution superior to any obstacle, but an efficacy and a wisdom in his discourse, capable of subduing the most rebellious spirits.

#### A R T I C L E VII.

*Christ foretold that his apostles would on all occasions be endued with a wisdom superior to all their enemies, and that it was he that would bestow that wisdom on them. The extent of such a promise.*

**T**HIS is in fact what he promised them in such express and absolute terms, as cannot be sufficiently admired. \* “ Ye shall  
“ be brought before governors and kings for  
“ my sake, for a testimony against them and  
“ the Gentiles. But when they deliver you  
“ up, take no thought how or what ye shall  
“ speak, for it shall be given you in that same  
“ hour

Q<sub>3</sub>

\* Matth. x. 18.

PART "hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye  
 V. "that speak, but the Spirit of your Father  
 "which speaketh in you." Was there ever  
 a promise more capable of exposing the person  
 that warranted its success? a promise that was  
 on one side so clear, and on the other so un-  
 likely to come to pass? a promise more easy  
 at the same time to be convicted of falshood,  
 if it did not succeed, and more difficult to ren-  
 der effective?

For to whom was this promise made? To  
 men of no letters or education, men endued  
 with none of those qualifications which elevate  
 the soul, and hinder it from being disconcerted  
 by any sudden or unforeseen accident: men of  
 obscure birth, and of a timorous disposition,  
 accustomed by their low condition to trem-  
 ble before men in power, and with much  
 more reason before strange kings: to men,  
 who were ignorant not only of the first rudi-  
 ments of human learning, but who were as  
 yet children in the knowledge of religion, and  
 whose understandings seemed unequal to the  
 mysteries they revealed.

And what did he promise to men of this  
 stamp? To endue them upon all, even the  
 most terrible occasions, with reason sufficient  
 to confute kings and governors; and to give  
 them, without any preparation, and at the  
 very instant they were obliged to speak, so  
 perfect and divine an utterance, as would make  
 them appear actuated by the Spirit of God.

If it had happened to one apostle, after such  
 a declaration, to be confused and embarrassed



in the presence of a magistrate or governor, CHAP. II.  
all the rest would have been intimidated, and the plan of their mission disconcerted. But how many things must be supposed necessary on all occasions, to prevent the like inconvenience? and what a number of miracles must concur to render this durable?

What objections could not the most learned of the Jews raise against an ignorant people, to whom the scriptures were so long unknown? and how easy it seems to cast a mist before their eyes and to puzzle them, nay to silence them by the false interpretations and sophisms of the doctors of law? What objections could not the doctors and sages of the world start against persons who believed a God made man, born in a manger, crucified by his own people, and rejected by the whole body of the nation? Was it not natural to treat as folly, what had so much the appearance of it; and to stop, by specious reasonings, the mouth of those who valued themselves on no other knowledge than that of Christ crucified?

And yet Christ promised quite otherwise to his apostles, and this promise he makes not only as a surety, but as the author of that superior wisdom, that was to be communicated to them upon all occasions, when it would be necessary to bear witness of him. . . . \* "Ye shall be brought, says he, before kings and governors for my name sake: but take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your

Q 4

" ene-

\* Matth. x. 18.

PART "enemies cannot contradict or gainsay." Thus

V. Christ engaged himself personally: 'tis him  
the apostles must blame if they be conquered by human wisdom, and if their preaching should meet with invincible opposition; and 'tis intirely upon his word that they are going to publish throughout the world, even to the remotest parts, that he was the promised Saviour; that the way to repentance was open, and remission of sins would be granted to those who believed in him; and that it was before him all men would appear at the last day to give an account of their actions, and to be either rewarded or punished. The business is therefore to compare henceforward Christ's predictions with the event, and his promises with their effect. And to do this it requires only to open our eyes, the facts being so public and remarkable, that to deny them is impossible, as it is unnecessary to prove them.



## C H A P. III.

*The literal accomplishment of the prediction of the success of the gospel, which quickly spread from Jerusalem and all the other parts of Judea to Samaria, as well as the neighbouring countries, and even to the remotest corners of the earth. The accomplishment likewise of what was foretold of the blindness of the Jews; their punishment and impenitence, tho' the whole seemed improbable. The prediction of the faith of the Gentiles fulfilled, tho' very difficult and improbable after the incredulity of the Jews. The promise of courage and invincible patience made to the apostles, fulfilled, tho' all circumstances seemed to oppose it. Important reflections on the courage and zeal of the apostles, which ought not to be confounded with the courage and patience of other martyrs. The accomplishment likewise of the promise made by Christ to his apostles, to endue them with such a degree of wisdom, as would baffle all their enemies. The superior power of Christ fully proved by the triumph of a wisdom which had only the appearance of folly.*

## ARTICLE

ARTICLE I.

*The literal accomplishment of the prediction of the success of the gospel, which quickly spread from Jerusalem and all the neighbouring nations, even to the remotest corners of the earth.*

THE prediction \* relative to the success of the gospel, which compares it in its beginning to a little leaven hid in dough, or to a grain of mustard-seed covered by the earth, soon shewed its virtue and efficacy, not only to the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea, but to all those who came from every part of the world to celebrate the Pentecost, who all heard in their own native language, the apostles publishing the marvellous works of God, and the grandeur of Jesus Christ; and who at their return spread forth throughout the world, the news of the resurrection, which remained a secret till that time, and was known only to a few witnesses.

The persecutions raised by the priests against the disciples of Christ, served only to hasten the accomplishment of his predictions, and render it more visible. Philip, † one of the deacons, being forced to quit Jerusalem, retired

\* Matth. xxviii. 18. Mark xvi. 15. Luke xxiv. 46. Acts i. 8. Acts x. 42.

† Acts viii. 4.



tired to Samaria, and there preached the gos-  
pel with such success, that Simon, who de-  
luded the people by his magic, and made him-  
self respected as inspired by God, desired to  
be baptized, and renounced the vanity of his  
conjurations.

CHAP.  
III.

The other disciples dispersed by the same  
persecution, \* went even into Phenicia, Cy-  
prus, and Antioch, and dared to proclaim  
Christ to the Gentiles, having preached else-  
where to those only of their own nation; and  
such was the efficacy of their words, that many  
were converted to the Lord, and it was in  
Antioch that the disciples began publicly to  
glory in his name, and assume the title of  
Christians.

In a little time afterwards the people, whom  
the apostles assigned each to their share in or-  
der to convert them to the christian faith,  
heard the gospel preached, and received it. St.  
Peter in his first epistle mentions several pro-  
vinces in Asia Minor, where he had preached.  
St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans speaks  
thus of his labours, and of the success attending  
them. † “ I have therefore, whereof I may  
“ glory through Jesus Christ in those things  
“ which pertain to God. For I will not dare  
“ to speak of any of those things which Christ  
“ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gen-  
“ tiles obedient, by word and deed, through  
“ mighty signs and wonders by the power of  
“ the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem,  
“ and

\* Acts iv. 19.

† Rom. xv. 17.

PART “ and round about unto || Illyricum, I have  
 V. “ fully preached the gospel of Christ.” And  
 the same apostle, in the same epistle, is not  
 afraid to affirm, \* that the figurative prophecy  
 in the nineteenth Psalm, of the surprizing suc-  
 cess of the apostles, and of the light with which  
 they should illuminate the whole world, was  
 already accomplished in his time. “ Their  
 “ sound, says he, † was gone out into all  
 “ lands, and their words into the ends of the  
 “ world.” But it was not a feeble and impo-  
 tent sound, nor were they words without vir-  
 tue or power ; for the same apostle says, ‡ in  
 his epistle to the Colossians, “ The word of  
 “ the truth of the gospel is come unto all the  
 “ world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth  
 “ also in you, since the day ye heard of it,  
 “ and knew the grace of God in truth.”

Thus, according to the prediction and pro-  
 mise of Christ, the gospel diffused its influence  
 from Jerusalem through all Judea, afterwards  
 to Samaria, then thro’ the remotest corners of  
 the earth, where it was attended with a sudden  
 and prodigious success, of which even the writ-  
 ings of the apostles assure us, without there  
 being any occasion to search for proofs in the  
 authors of the first and second centuries of the  
 church, who inform us, that in their time,  
 not only the people under the Roman yoke,  
 but even barbarous nations, embraced the faith  
 of Christ, and that their cities and villages were  
 full of christians.

#### ARTICLE

|| This contained Palestine, Asia Minor, Syria, Thrace, Ma-  
 cedonia, Greece, &c.

\* Rom. x. 18.

† Psalm xix. 4.

‡ Coloss. i. 6.



A R T I C L E II.

*The accomplishment of what was foretold  
of the blindness of the Jews, as also  
of their punishment and impenitence,  
tho' the whole seemed improbable.*

**B**UT let us examine with some attention, how exactly the words of Christ were fulfilled. The progress of the gospel was so great at Jerusalem, that they might well expect the conversion of all the Jews. By the first sermon of Saint Peter, three thousand souls were converted. By the second he gained five thousand; \* “and even a great company of “priests were obedient to the faith.” And the apostle Saint James † represented to Saint Paul, how many thousands of Jews believed, tho’ they still were zealously attached to the law. It was therefore very likely that the rest would follow their example, and be constrained by the miracles of the apostles, and by the evidence of the prophecies, to acknowledge Christ to be the Messiah and promised deliverer. But Christ had foretold the contrary, and consequently that which seemed probable never came to pass. He chose a certain number, and abandoned the rest; those which he reserved to himself were spared and saved by grace; the rest were sacrificed to his justice. ‡ The salutary sign of the cross was impressed on

\* Acts vi. 7. † Chap. xx. 21. ‡ Chap. ix. 4.

PART on the foreheads of many, according to the  
V. prophecies of Ezekiel, and the rest were put  
to the edge of the sword.

As soon as he acquired a new kingdom in a distant country, he revenged himself on those rebels who were unwilling that he should reign over them: the armies commanded by his lieutenants, came and besieged Jerusalem, destroyed it by fire, together with the temple, which was its chief glory; and all the privileges of the Jews were transferred to strangers; the sacred writings, promises, covenant, the Messiah, and salvation, with the vine figuratively representing the church, were taken away from the vine-dressers and homicides, and entrusted to grateful ministers.

It was very likely that such chastisements would at last open their eyes, and that they would make a proper use of their misfortunes, the cause of which they could be no strangers to. But Christ foretold their impenitence and hardness of heart, by ordering them to be put to death in his presence, which signified their obstinacy and his justice.



A R T I C L E    I I I .

*The prediction of the faith of the Gentiles fulfilled, tho' very difficult and improbable after the incredulity of the Jews.*

I N fact the Jews openly declared themselves his enemies in all places where the gospel was promulged, and tried their utmost \* efforts to oppose the predication of the apostles and the conversion of the Gentiles, for which reason it became more difficult and less probable. For it was not likely that a people who knew nothing of the scriptures, nor of the ancient prophecies, who never heard the Messiah mentioned, should believe in him of whom they had no idea ; and whom the very nation he was sent to, crucified ; or that they should think they could understand the prophecies relating to him, better than the ancient people in whose hands they were deposited. It was not likely they would submit to a king, whom his own subjects renounced, treating him as an impious usurper. Nor was it likely that the scandal of the cross, which one might think would darken the predictions of a glorious and immortal king, and which had rendered him despicable to so many of the Jews, would not be an obstacle to the

\* " Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved." 1 Thess. ii. 16.

PART the belief of such, who only judge of things  
 V. by their senses, and of royalty by magnificence  
 and grandeur.

But Christ foretold that the Gentiles would come in crouds to unite themselves to the faith of Abraham. He told the disciples that he was answerable for their docility: and what seemed improbable on both sides; the Jews having rejected, the Gentiles embraced the faith, and gloried in the seeming ignominy of the cross. They clearly saw the prediction of the ancient prophecies, and instead of being discouraged by the incredulity of the Jews, they became more firm in the faith, because they saw that their blindness was foretold.

#### A R T I C L E IV.

*The accomplishment of the promise made to the apostles of invincible patience and courage, tho' every circumstance seemed to oppose it.*

W H E N Christ exhorted his apostles neither to be afraid of torments nor even of death, but boldly to publish what he communicated in secret, and to place an entire confidence in his power, and in the manner in which he triumphed over the world. All this favoured of improbability; yet on the day of Pentecost how was all this cleared up by the event? what menaces could shut the mouths of the apostles? what torments could intimi-



intimidate them? what honours did they ac-  
quire by their sufferings for their master? \*

CHAP.

III.

with what warmth did they desire to participate his sufferings in order to share his glory? and how invincible they thought themselves by relying on his love and protection?

“† What then shall we say to these things?

“If God be for us, who can be against us?

“Who shall separate us from the love of

“‡ Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or

“persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or

“peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy

“sake we are killed all the day long, we are

“counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay,

“in all these things we are more than con-

“querors, through him that loved us. For I

“am persuaded, that neither death, nor life,

“nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,

“nor things present, nor things to come,

“nor height, nor depth, nor any other crea-

“ture, shall be able to separate us from the

“love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our

“Lord.”

’Tis impossible to explain in a more sublime manner, what was comprised in the majestic stile of those words pronounced by Christ: || “In the world ye shall have tribu-

“lation;

\* “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” Acts. v. 41.

† Rom. viii. 31, and 35, &c.

‡ It is evident from the whole discourse of Saint Paul, and chiefly verse 37, and 38, that it is God’s love towards his elect which must be here understood.

|| St. John xvi. 33.

PART "lation, but be of good cheer, I have over-

V. "come the world." And take notice, that  
 St. Paul's defiance to all things that come not from God, to surmount even by the greatest torments the love which Christ bore him, is not a simple fallacy of the mind, or a transient motion of the heart of a person as yet untried, or who had not been exposed to great temptations. Saint Paul, who wrote thus to the Corinthians, mentions what he suffered for the gospel, not to gain the applause of men, but to confound the vanity of some false apostles, who were very unlike the true ones. \* "In deaths oft, (says he) of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one: thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in weariness and painfulness; in watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." This great apostle lived ten years after, † and he could not include in this recital neither what he suffered at Jerusalem, when he was confined there, nor what he endured in the prisons of Cæsarea and Rome, nor all the persecutions before his martyrdom.

He cannot justly be denied the glory of having laboured and undergone more than the other apostles. Yet we ought to judge of their toils and sufferings almost by his, and of their courage by that which he discovered: for all  
 the

\* 2 Cor. xi. 23, 25, 27.

† He wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians in 57, and he died ten years after, in 66 or 67.



the apostles are included in the description he CHAP.  
gives of the faithful ministers of Christ in the III.  
same epistle. ‡ “ Giving no offence in any  
“ thing, that the ministry be not blamed :  
“ but in all things approving ourselves as the  
“ ministers of God, in much patience, in af-  
“ flictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes,  
“ in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in  
“ watchings, in fastings.” I omit the rest to  
avoid prolixity, but I recommend the reading  
of it \* ; and I am persuaded, that the reader  
will admire how much the courage and zeal,  
which Christ promised, and actually commu-  
nicated to his disciples, was above all human  
fortitude, and at the same time superior to all  
worldly impediments.

## ARTICLE V.

*Important reflections on the courage and  
zeal of the apostles, which ought not  
to be confounded with the courage  
and patience of other martyrs.*

THIS will appear still clearer to those  
who will please to join with me in the  
following reflections. In the first place, the  
apostles were not as other martyrs, exposed  
only to one trial, but passed thro’ a succession  
of dangers, and from one suffering to another.  
After having been imprisoned and whipped in  
one city, they immediately went to preach in  
another,

R 2

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 3.

\* From verse 6, to 10.

PART another, where they must expect the same  
V. treatment. They were neither permitted to  
be silent, nor to sit quiet till they were sought  
after to give an account of their faith: they  
were commanded to tear up and to plant, to  
destroy and to build, to pursue the usurper  
without intermission, and to oblige the whole  
world to return to the obedience of their law-  
ful king, whom they had forgot. To succeed  
in this great affair, their labours must be daily  
renewed as well as the dangers, and they must  
die a thousand times thro' apprehension, and  
by a preparation of the heart, before they  
were effectually bereft of their lives. If the  
apostles had not been supported by a divine  
power, what patience and courage would have  
been able to defend them in this difficult mi-  
nistry? what zeal, what ardor, would not  
have been subdued by cruelties so often repeat-  
ed, if the source of their zeal had been only  
natural? We know what men are; they are  
soon tired of sufferings, when they have it in  
their own power to end them. Courage has  
its season, and so has the love of ease and re-  
pose. The passions are successive; and when  
a man is actuated by them, he becomes paci-  
fic after having been fond of war, especially  
when he has been often wounded, or made  
prisoner.

Secondly, The apostles did not preach in  
obscure places, distant from the magistrates and  
governors, contenting themselves with pro-  
ceeding quietly and patiently to avoid danger.  
On the contrary, they proclaimed Christ in  
the



the greatest cities, where the governors and chief magistrates resided, and where all public authority was against them. Thus they exposed themselves to the greatest torments, the instant they spoke; and even exposed themselves, after having many times experienced, that the danger was as great as they foresaw. Thus the Roman empire was filled with the evangelical doctrine in a few years. Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Athens, Thessalonica, Corinth, and the metropolis of each province, were immediately instructed by the apostles. And, before their death, all places of any note heard of Jesus Christ. But from what wonderful courage must such a series of success proceed? and how greatly must they despise death and its punishments, thus openly to attack the reigning idolatry, surrounded by every thing that could make it appear formidable.

Thirdly, It was not then, as in our time, when several princes divide among themselves those provinces, which constituted the Roman empire. One master governed the universe, and his commands were strictly executed from the farthest parts of Spain and Africa, even to the frontiers of Persia. Thus the Christian religion, which Nero severely persecuted, had no asylum in any province of the Roman empire. And the apostles, charged with the universal publication, marched always into an enemy's country; and besides the particular opposition which they met with in every place, they were certain of a general and public one

PART from the prince and magistrates, who acted by  
 V. his authority. Let any judicious man join all  
 these together; let him examine himself as to  
 his opinion of them, and let him judge, if it  
 be natural that the apostles should never be  
 tired of preaching in new places, a religion  
 always persecuted; that they should affect to  
 publish it in the greatest cities in the presence  
 of governors, and of the emperor himself;  
 and that they should persist with an indefati-  
 gably industry in so dangerous a function, tho'  
 they could expect neither protection nor asylum  
 in that vast extent of empire, from whence  
 they were ordered to expel the devil, who had  
 every where temples and altars, in order to  
 make room for Christ, whose cross was looked  
 upon as folly, and whose name was so odious,  
 that believing in him was sufficient to merit  
 death.

## ARTICLE VI.

*The fulfilling the promise made to Christ  
 and his apostles, to endue them with  
 that wisdom, which their enemies  
 could not contradict.*

THE promise which Christ made to his  
 apostles, “\* to give them a mouth and  
 “ wisdom, which all their adversaries shall  
 “ not be able to gain say nor resist,” was as  
 fully accomplished as that of enduing them  
 with

\* Luke xxi. 15.



with invincible courage and patience. We CHAP.  
have seen and heard the wise answers they III.  
made to the priests, doctors of law, and council  
of elders, who commanded them under severe  
penalties not to speak of Christ and his re-  
surrection. “† They said unto them, Whether  
“ it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto  
“ you more than God, judge ye. For we can-  
“ not but speak the things which we have  
“ seen and heard.” And upon another occa-  
sion: “ ‡ We ought to obey God rather than  
“ men. The God of our fathers raised up  
“ Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a  
“ tree. Him hath God exalted with his right  
“ hand, to be a prince and a saviour, for to give  
“ repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of  
“ sins. And we are his witnesses of these  
“ things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom  
“ God hath given to them that obey him.”  
These answers, supported by evident proofs  
drawn from the prophets, at first astonished  
those, who knew that the apostles were illite-  
rate men, and silenced them: but their inability  
to make a reply, threw them at length into rage  
and despair \*. And this fury was a perfect  
conviction, that they were incapable to contra-  
dict with any success, a mouth and wisdom di-  
rected by Christ.

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Saint

† Acts iv. 19. ‡ Acts v. 29. &amp;c.

\* “ When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and  
“ took counsel to slay them.” Acts v. 33.“ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart,  
“ and gnashed on him with their teeth.” Acts vii. 54.

PART Saint Peter's speeches before the people and  
 V. council, mentioned in the acts of the apostles,  
 and his two epistles, are public monuments of  
 that heavenly wisdom which he had received. Saint Matthew's and Saint John's gospels, so sublime from their very beginning, and so full of a supernatural doctrine, are also sensible witnesses thereof. And whoever reads, with due attention, Saint John's first epistle, and that of Saint James, will trace out, without trouble, a wisdom much superior to that of man; which, when strictly examined, is only an empty pride and foolish ostentation of false or barren notions.

Saint Paul, who had studied more than the other apostles, and who esteemed himself wise, and of sound judgment, whilst he was in darkness, despised every thing that he knew before he had knowledge of Christ, and \* counted it as loss, and dung in comparison of the wisdom he received from him; the principal effect of which was to confound and destroy that false wisdom, and force it to submit to the seeming folly of the cross. "† Christ, he said, sent me to preach the  
 "gospel: not with wisdom of words,  
 "lest the cross of Christ should be of none  
 "effect. For the preaching of the cross is to  
 "them that perish, foolishness: but unto us  
 "which are saved, it is the power of God.  
 "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom  
 "of the wise, and will bring to nothing the  
 "under-

\* Phil. iii. 7, 8.

† 1 Cor. i. 17.



“ understanding of the prudent. Where is the CHAP.  
“ wise? where is the scribe? where is the III.  
“ disputer of the world? hath not God made  
“ foolish the wisdom of this world? For af-  
“ ter that, in the wisdom of God, the world  
“ by wisdom knew not God, it pleased  
“ God by the foolishness of preaching to save  
“ them that believe. For the Jews require a  
“ sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:  
“ But we preach Christ crucified, unto the  
“ Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the  
“ Greeks, foolishness: But unto them that  
“ are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ  
“ the power of God and the wisdom of  
“ God. Because the foolishness of God is  
“ wiser than men; and the weakness of God  
“ is stronger than men.”

## ARTICLE VII.

*The power of Christ clearly proved by  
the triumph of a wisdom, which had  
the appearance of folly.*

THE above is what Christ had promised  
his apostles, nobly explained by him  
who was most concerned in this promise: The  
design was to overcome and silence human sa-  
gacity, by a wisdom which seemed but folly:  
the design was to make reason submit to that  
which seemed most proper to shock it. The de-  
sign was, in fine, to triumph over all human  
eloquence

PART eloquence by a manner of preaching plain in  
V. appearance, and void of all artificial colour.

Christ was not willing to confound human reason by ways consonant to it, but on the contrary chose those very methods which human reason despised. It would have been doing it too much honour to oppose it, by a wisdom whose sublimity and elegance it had been forced to admire. 'Twas worthy God alone to silence it, by a wisdom which had the appearance of folly, and after having silenced it to prove, that what wore the garb of folly, infinitely surpassed every thing which human reason could have suggested as great and reasonable, had he been pleased to consult it.

The business is now to examine, whether this project succeeded. But whom can such an examination avail? “\* Where is the wise? “ where is the scribe? where is the disputer “ of this world?” Has not God shewn the wisdom of the world to be folly, a wisdom so useless to piety, so ambiguous in the most simple truths, so liable to illusion and error, so blind to what relates to the designs of God, so incapable of discerning the difference between real and counterfeited wisdom, so prejudiced against solid wisdom, and the means of salvation, and so grossly mistaken in regard to the mean external appearance of Christ, which concealed a divine power and wisdom?

Which of the two has been silenced, the apostles, or the philosophers? which of the  
two

\* 1 Cor. i. 20.



two wisdoms gave way, that which the world CHAP.  
treated as folly, or that which the ministers of III.  
Christ looked upon as senseless? which gained {  
the victory, human eloquence, or christian  
simplicity? was there any necessity to hide  
the cross of Christ, to say nothing of it, to  
embellish it by fictions, to lessen its scandal  
and disgrace by subtle reasoning? could the  
idols stand before the cross of Christ? was not  
idolatry abashed, and its professors forced to gloss  
and paint it over with false allegories, invented  
after their defeat, to extenuate their shame,  
which, after the promulgation of the gospel,  
became insupportable? Did not the world,  
prostrated before Christ, acknowledge the ap-  
parent folly and weakness of his cross, to be  
the source of strength and wisdom? was it  
not constrained to blush at the senseless wor-  
ship, which it had paid so long to devils,  
who could only make them partake of their  
misery and blindness?

*Important reflections on the predication of the apostles, who, far from being ashamed of the folly of the cross, placed their whole confidence in it: and on their weakness in which they gloried. The divinity of Christ clearly evinced by the efficacy of the gospel, and by the weakness of its ministers. The apostles knew very well, that it was impossible to succeed by human means, in persuading the belief of Christ crucified. They even made the success of their predication depend on the scandal of the cross. Tho' they wrought many miracles yet they attributed the efficacy of their words only to the cross of Christ. Oppositions of every kind to the success of the gospel increased in the time of the apostles, who triumphed over all, and were fully persuaded they should be victorious. The apostles in a very little time made a surprizing progress, without making use of any human assistance. God's design in employing only weak men, and conscious of their disability, in conducting a work infinitely above human strength and wisdom. Invincible force of the demonstration founded on the plan and design of Christ, on the means he chose, on his predictions contrary in all respects to probability, and on the events which clearly justified them.*

**B**UT tho' it be of no use to examine so notorious a fact, as the triumph of the apostles over all human wisdom, yet it is the interest



interest of truth to consider some of the circumstances with a fresh attention.

CHAP.  
IV.

ARTICLE I.

*The apostles knew very well, that it was impossible to succeed by human means, in persuading the belief of Christ crucified.*

FIRST I consider, that the apostles knew very well how impossible it was for them to succeed by any human means, to persuade people into a belief of the doctrine of Christ crucified, which was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and folly to the Gentiles. They knew that the Jews, accustomed to ancient prodigies, and who expected a deliverer, capable like Moses to conquer the kings of the earth, could allow of nothing but miracles, and such a deliverance as they had from the Egyptian bondage: that a deliverer, who could not save himself from death, and even a death of the most ignominious kind, was to them an inexplicable paradox: and that it was a stumbling-block to them, which neither their understanding nor their ears could bear, to be obliged to confess, that they had killed him who was promised to their fore-fathers, and that they had tied him to the cross as accursed, in whom all nations were to be blessed.

They

**PART** They knew likewise, that the Gentiles, who  
**V.** were ignorant of the scriptures, and of divine  
 revelation, believed nothing but what was obvious to reason, esteemed nothing but the sciences, and could not be convinced but by arguments and satisfactory proofs; and that they were more unlikely than the Jews to believe him a Saviour, by whom they saw no miracle performed, and who was rejected by his own people.

## ARTICLE II.

*They even made the success of their predication depend on the scandal of the cross.*

**I**N the second place I consider, that the apostles, very far from being frightened at these difficulties, founded their confidence on them, and it was even from the scandal of the cross and the apparent folly of preaching Christ crucified, that they expected the success of their predication \*. That instead of extenuating and tempering this kind of scandal by artificial discourses and human reasoning, they thought it would be losing all to weaken the efficacy of the cross, by making use † of any other means, and were persuaded, that  
 God

\* "Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." 1 Cor. i. 17.

† "Then is the offence of the cross ceased." Gal. v. 11.



God having chosen ignominy and the cross to CHAP.  
convert the world, and to render it faithful, IV.  
it would appear as if they had altered his de-  
sign, and condemned his thoughts, to expect  
from eloquence and human wisdom the faith  
and salvation which he was pleased to annex  
to the cross and opprobrious sufferings of his  
Son.

### ARTICLE III.

*Tho' they wrought many miracles, yet they  
attributed the efficacy of their words  
only to the cross of Christ.*

IN the third place I consider, that the  
apostles, who were invested with the pow-  
er of working miracles, and who performed  
numberless prodigies, never divided the success  
of their predication between the proof of  
their miracles and the efficacy of the cross.  
But they attributed all to the powerful virtue  
of Christ crucified, “ \* Who of God, says  
“ Saint Paul, is made unto us wisdom, and  
“ righteousness, and sanctification, and re-  
“ demption : That, according as it is written,  
“ He that glorieth, let him glory in the  
“ Lord.” The miracles having no other effect  
but what he gives them, insomuch that they  
might have left all the Jews and Gentiles in  
incredulity and obstinacy, as in fact they have  
left an infinite number,

### ARTICLE

## ARTICLE IV.

*Oppositions of every kind to the success of the gospel increased in the times of the apostles, who triumphed over all, and were fully convinced they should be victorious.*

**I**N the fourth place I consider, that from a firm persuasion that Christ crucified had occasion only for himself and his cross to subdue the world; the apostles made no doubt but their preaching would prevail on all hearts and empires to embrace their doctrine, notwithstanding the credit and power of idolatry, which was never more predominant; notwithstanding the false philosophy which had passed from Greece to Italy, and which being divided into two sects, the Epicureans and the Stoics, both at that time in great reputation, opposed either voluptuousness or pride to the progress of the gospel; notwithstanding the corruption of an age sunk by luxury, and an implacable enemy to the predication of the cross; notwithstanding the general disposition of men of parts and education, who relished nothing but what was agreeable, and was expressed in an ingenious manner, more proper to feed than to extirpate curiosity and the other vices of the mind; notwithstanding the general contempt the Jews were fallen into, and the prejudice against



against them at Rome, in Greece, and every CHAP.  
where else, and of every thing that came IV.  
from them; in fine, notwithstanding the little  
regard almost all men of parts at that time had  
for religion, having sense enough to discover  
the false, without giving themselves the trou-  
ble of finding out the true, changing from  
the extreme of believing every thing to that  
of believing nothing.

ARTICLE V.

*The apostles in a very little time made  
a surprizing progress, without mak-  
ing use of any human means.*

**I**N the fifth place, I consider that in an age  
too learned to be seduced, and too obsti-  
nate to be converted, the apostles made in a  
short time a most amazing progress, without  
deviating from their character; without unit-  
ing with the gospel any human science; with-  
out paving the way for the philosophers, by  
meeting them half way, as some christian doc-  
tors have since very imprudently done; with-  
out softening the severity of the gospel to great  
personages; without complimenting men in  
power; without promising their disciples other  
than invisible goods; without preparing them  
against persecutions, but by invincible patience;  
without suffering them in the greatest extremi-  
ties to use any disguise or equivocations in order  
to be released: I consider, I say, all this, which

PART deserves to be strictly and minutely examined;  
 V. and I declare, I cannot help seeing the powerful hand of him who performed those wonderful things by such disproportionate means, and by such incompetent instruments.

## ARTICLE VI.

*God's design in employing only weak men, who were conscious of their disability, to conduct a work infinitely above human strength and wisdom.*

“ \* GOD hath chosen the foolish things  
 “ of the world to confound the wise;  
 “ † and he hath chosen the weak things of  
 “ the world to confound the things which are  
 “ mighty. And base things of the world, and  
 “ things which are despised, hath God chosen;  
 “ yea, and things which are not, to bring to  
 “ nought things that are: that no flesh should  
 “ glory in his presence.” He would not share  
 his glory, of which he is jealous, either with  
 man, or with the means he was pleased to chuse.  
 He would appear alone, that our faith might  
 not become doubtful, and not to leave us under  
 an uncertainty, whether it was he, or some  
 other, who had performed what we admire.

The more the means would have appeared  
 effectual to us, the more they would have concealed  
 the hand that employed them. It was  
 necessary for our good that the obstacles should

\* 1 Cor. i. 27.

† Rom. iii. 19.



be chosen, and converted afterwards into means. CHAP.

It was necessary that the cross and ignominy, IV.

things of themselves capable of shocking mankind, should have the virtue of conquering them and rendering them believers. It was necessary that the apostles should be possessed of nothing which the world admires, fears, or hopes for, and that by this very means they should subdue it.

It was necessary that all worldly obstacles should concur to oppose the gospel, such as authority, threatnings, torments, human wisdom, false virtue, luxury, delicacies, atheism, an abhorrence of the truth, an horror of the cross, a contemptible opinion of the preachers and their doctrine; and that all these obstacles should give way to the secret virtue of the gospel, and to the seeming weakness of those that proclaimed it.

It was necessary that the christian religion, being of divine institution, should have God alone for its protector and witness. He alone was worthy to attest it, and make it respected. It belonged only to him to prove it, and mark it with his own seal. And he never did it in a more august manner, and more becoming himself, than in refusing every thing that could offuscate his presence or majesty, and in employing only weak men, and such as were conscious of their infirmities, in a work superior to all human wisdom and power, a work in which they could not effectually assist, but by acknowledging their own weakness and impotence.

## ARTICLE VII.

*Invincible force of the demonstration founded upon the plan and design of Christ, on the means he chose, on his predictions contrary to all probability, and on the events which clearly justified them.*

WHAT can now hinder the incredulous from seeing our Saviour Christ, when he has taken so much precaution that they might see nothing but him? Will they deny the conversion of the world? will they attribute that conversion to any but the apostles? will they pretend that the apostles had eminent qualifications in a worldly sense? and do they think they can thus invalidate what men well instructed and cotemporaries, men who were otherwise, as is supposed, of superior merit according to our ideas, have attested and sealed with their blood?

Will they refuse to discern the age of Augustus and Tiberius in the picture we have drawn of it, or will they imagine that there was at that time a happy disposition in the hearts and minds of the Greeks and Romans to worship a Jew, crucified at Jerusalem, his fellow citizens, and condemned by all the courts of judicature?

How



How much more just would it be to give CHAP.  
glory to God and to his only Son Jesus Christ, IV.  
for such wonderful events, which so visibly  
bear the stamp of their power? And how  
happy ought we to think ourselves that he has  
granted us so easy and reasonable a faith, that  
we must use violence to the natural sentiments  
of our understandings and heart, to deny the  
proofs by which it is demonstrated? For no  
one can disown, but that every thing seemed  
impossible to be brought about in Christ's plan  
and design, of converting the whole world;  
that the means he chose were obstacles to it;  
that nothing was less probable than his predic-  
tions; that the event has notwithstanding  
punctually verified his prophecies: and these  
four points incontestably prove that he is God,  
because they shew that he foresaw, and operated  
every thing.

## CHAP. V.

*The doctrine of Christ alone instructs mankind in all the truths necessary to salvation.*

## CHAP. VI.

*The morality of Christ alone brings man acquainted with the means of making his present meanness subservient to the recovery of his former grandeur.*

## CHAP. VII.

*The mysteries of Christ are so superior to reason, that before their accomplishment no one could have formed an idea of them; but after their success they all seem ordained by a profound wisdom.*

## CHAP. VIII.

*Characteristics of the true church, as it was founded by Jesus Christ: difference between it and the synagogue: advice to quit the latter, and prohibition to desert the former. We must continue united to the succession to which we are obliged to return, in order to trace things up to the apostles, and even to Jesus Christ.*

## CHAP. I.



IV. OF MICH. C H A P. IX.

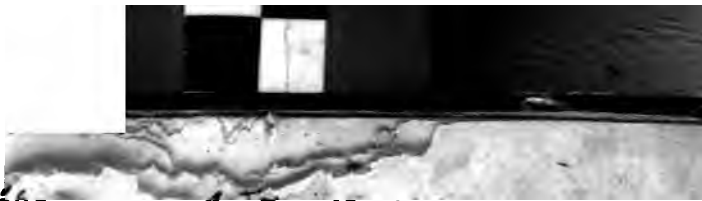
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*Doubts, or even incredulity, are entirely owing to our not examining the whole plan of religion, and to our attending to a single circumstance, which has the appearance of a difficulty, tho' it would excite our admiration were it seen in its proper place.*

C H A P. X.

*Recapitulation, exhortation, thanksgiving.*

F I N I S.



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PAB

*A Treatise of the Principles*



